DOMESTIC LIFE IN RUMANIA

DOROTHEA KIRKE

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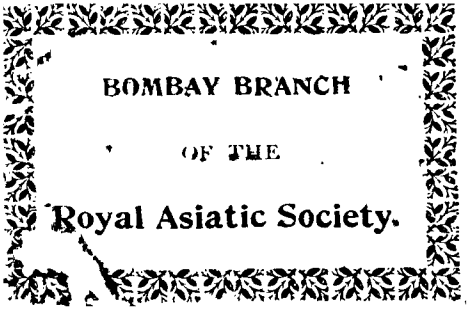

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DOMESTIC LIFE IN RUMANIA

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BY DOROTHEA KIRKE

WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

THESE letters were written by Millie Ormonde to her cousin, Edmund Talbot, Squire of Talwood, Devonshire. Talwood had been Millie's home for many years, but at the death of her aunt, Lady Augusta Talbot, she went to Bukarest as "La Nurse" in a Rumanian family.

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LETTER I

Bukarest.

My dear Edmund,

Your letter was the first thing that met my eyes when I entered my fine nursery on Thursday last. The hand-writing looked so familiar, yet so strange in its new surroundings. It made you and Talwood seem very far away. It *was* good of you to write so soon; after all, it is barely a week since I started on my uneventful journey across Europe.

You will not care for very long descriptions of my journey, as most of the countries I traversed are well known to you.

Two facts stand out prominently in my memory: the first, that all the way to Budapest I had English-speaking companions; and, the

second, that from Budapest to Bukarest, a matter of twenty-four hours, I had nothing to eat except a sandwich. I should have been without that but for the kindness of a lady in the train who came to my rescue. She took me to the station restaurant at Ploesti, where I had a steaming glass of weak tea minus milk or sugar, and a sandwich two inches thick with a curious flavour.

This lady was travelling with a tiresome little boy and a female person. I write "person" advisedly, because I don't know what her station in life was. She was plain and plump and smiling, and dressed in grey. The lady lay frequently with her head on her companion's lap, and let her wrestle alone with the tiresome child.

They were both very much interested in me, and asked me many questions, in French. They had never heard English spoken, and asked me to make some remarks in my own language, which I obligingly did, and they said it sounded very pretty. Then I gave them a little whisky and water to taste—I had not touched my flask—they thought it extremely nasty, and it made them cough and their eyes water.

It was fortunate I had so long at Budapest, and was able to lay in what you call a good square

meal. The station restaurant is a fine place, with marble pillars, palms and huge mirrors.

An interpreter, two waiters, and a boy attended to my wants. The former looked me up and down. "Rosbif? beer?" he asked.

I studied the menu, it was full of strangely named dishes whose contents I feared to try, so I said "Yes" and "Ja."

The "rosbif" was fillet, the beer Pilsener, or some such light make, both very good. While I was eating the boy brought a number of post cards; he spoke in German, very slowly and loud enough to have been heard in Vienna, and managed to make me understand they were for sale. He also thoughtfully provided ink and a cross-nibbed pen, with which I wrote my post cards, and which I hope you received in due time.

We left Budapest at 9.30. As usual in continental trains, a number of people came in and out of the carriage all night. Do all foreigners spend their nights in the train? A stout German lady slumbered opposite to me, and looked so hideous I was quite frightened. All the next day we ran through the great plain of Hungary, which seemed inhabited by immense flocks of white turkeys. I saw no human beings, not

even round the untidy little villages with their broken palings and muddy yards. The cottages were white with deep hanging eaves; and under these quantities of maize cobs were hanging, I suppose to dry them.

Towards sunset we reached the Carpathians; I was unprepared for their beauty and longed to have some one to share my enthusiasm.

The train went puffing up and up through the passes between great pine forests, the sun glowing on the russet tree-trunks. There were glimpses through them of grey mountain peaks and rushing streams. Occasionally, a cart drawn by labouring oxen of a pale fawn colour staggered along the rough road, while a picturesque driver strode beside it, cracking a long whip.

There were two red-haired girls in the next compartment to mine who did not seem to have thought it worth while to dress. They wandered about the corridor in weird night garments, and ejaculated "*Kolossal!*" at intervals, presumably in admiration of the prospect. They had a very satisfied appearance, so I expect they had provisions with them.

Except for the mountains, I think I must have passed most of the beautiful parts of Europe

during the night, as the scenery was singularly ugly and uninteresting. The Rhine disappointed me. It may not look its best from the train, but I feel people admired it so much in the old days because they travelled so little.

At Bukarest I received a kind welcome. Dr. Goldschmidt met me himself at the station; we drove up to the house in what I imagined to be his private victoria and pair. Since then I have discovered it was an ordinary Bukarest cab! The coachmen wear fine velvet pelisses and nearly always drive two horses.

The streets fascinated me. They were well lighted, and the electric light showed up the picturesque figures that passed by. It was a lovely night, the moon was shining on the golden domes of the public buildings and made beautiful shadows across the roads. We drove in under the portico of a great house. I was received in the big hall, which I have since heard is a copy of one in an English country house. It has three long windows, a wide staircase leading to a gallery which surrounds two-thirds of it; it is well furnished; and amongst other things it contains two pianos—one a grand—which are lost in its vastness.

Madame Goldschmidt was there with her family and Mademoiselle Duval, the French governess.

I was very tired, and felt almost bewildered as Madame Goldschmidt shook hands with me and introduced each one in turn: Clara, in white, Irma, with long black hair, Oscar, the schoolboy. Madame wore a long mauve tea-gown; Mademoiselle a plaid blouse.

I was taken up to the study and given a good dinner, after which I retired thankfully to bed, and slept till ten o'clock the next morning. Since I discovered how much human traffic passes through the nursery, I wonder how many gazed upon my slumbering countenance.

I am beginning to feel more at home now and able to write you my first impressions, as you ask me. First I must tell you that I look very fetching in my uniform, the little bonnet with white strings is particularly becoming. My title is "La Nurse." The family speak French among themselves, there is no word in that language that quite answers to our "nurse." "*Nourrice*" is of course out of the question, "*garde-malade*" is a sick nurse, "*bonne*" is a kind of servant.

So "La Nurse" it is. It sounds quite pretty, don't you think?

You ask me of whom this household consists. Its elements are many and incongruous.

Madame Goldschmidt, a Russian by birth, is the ruling spirit; she is a stately dame, black-haired and dark-eyed, stout but comely. She has particularly beautiful hands and wears fine rings. I cannot deny she has a temper, but she has very bad health, which I am sure accounts for much of her irritability. She is invariably kind to me. In the morning she wears a *peignoir* and looks plump and comfortable; her afternoon toilettes are chic and expensive.

Dr. Goldschmidt is a Rumanian, probably of German extraction. He has a slender erect figure, wonderfully youthful for his more than fifty years, a large head, extraordinarily wide at the top, accentuated by his curling black hair, which he wears longer than is usual with our men. He dresses well and has a taste in ties. He is a clever man, a great linguist, agreeable in manner, especially to ladies, and has a fine bass voice.

Their family consists of three girls and a boy: Clara, a pleasant, intelligent girl of sixteen;

Oscar, a schoolboy, aged fourteen, much older than an English lad of the same years, though equally mischievous; Irma, a stout-legged child of eight, with dark eyes and a long black pigtail; and, last and least, Mella, who is not yet three, a curly-headed little thing with huge scared eyes.

Then there is Mademoiselle Duval, the French governess, small, green-eyed and wicked-looking; Regina, the gentle Austrian housekeeper; the old German cook; the parlour-maid, upper- and under-housemaid and kitchen ditto, all Hungarian or Rumanian-Hungarian—I am not sure which—and a handy man called André.

Dr. Goldschmidt is an *avocat;* he has his office or bureau under his own roof. In the bureau sit his secretary, Monsieur Alcalay, and his two under-secretaries, clerks I suppose we should call them.

You must not imagine, my dear Edmund, that this household at all resembles the dignified stateliness of Talwood, or that Regina is like the portly lady who "presides" over your establishment. Dear Mrs. Morris! I can see her now in her black silk and lace cap, I can hear the keys jangling at her satisfying waist. Regina is small, fair and timid-looking, a little lame in one knee;

she is rather pretty. She combines her office with that of sewing- and lady's-maid to Madame Goldschmidt. When Mella and I are driven from the nursery to make room for one of the numerous professors, we cast ourselves on her mercy, and she welcomes us to her little room, which is chiefly furnished with large wardrobes containing Madame's dresses. I peeped in one day, and there they were hanging in brown holland bags, looking for all the world like a row of Bluebeard's wives. Her window opens on to a balcony with iron railings round it, from which one can look over the garden into the neighbouring house, which house also belongs to Madame Goldschmidt, and the family used to live there before she built this beautiful house in what used to be the garden of the other.

This house is well and expensively furnished, but there is a want of the homeliness you find in most English houses. Madame's bedroom, for instance, is a fine room, with handsome furniture; but the window blinds want mending, and it is quite bare of the treasures one sees in the rooms of most mothers: the photographs, the quaint ornaments bought with carefully hoarded pennies, the early drawings, the curious

pieces of work, all the hundred and one things of no value in themselves upon which her loving eyes rest and sometimes fill with tears at the tender memories they recall.

The servants are not in the least like our tidy girls. Their hair is often elaborately "done," but their blouses hang loose at the waist, their shoeless feet display stockings with many holes. In the afternoon they look rather better, but none of them wear caps.

Victoria, the upper-housemaid, waits on us; she has her room on the same landing, the other servants having theirs in the palatial basement. Victoria is a tall woman with large dark eyes; she spends most of her nights out, and comes to work with a bad headache and her head tied up in a damp cloth. She makes us laugh sometimes by dressing herself up to imitate the old pope, or parish priest, who lives near the chapel opposite; she puts a long mat from the study floor round her shoulders, perches a muff on the top of her head, holds up a large book and pretends to drone out prayers. Can you imagine any of your numerous Maries imitating the rector? If she did, would you dismiss her? I wonder.

I could tell you some stories about the domes-

tics in this country which would make each particular hair on your virtuous head stand on end. I will refrain, as they are apparently an immoral race, perhaps not always from their own fault.

How like a man to ask me what we eat! My dear gourmet, we eat very well indeed, rather too well for some people's gastric powers. We have the usual continental breakfast of coffee and rolls, both excellent; luncheon or *déjeuner* at 12.30; tea at 4; dinner at 7.30. At least, these are the supposed hours, but the meals are often only "approximate"—punctuality is not a Rumanian virtue. The materials and cooking are first class, the "dishing-up" moderate, the service poor. There are long waits between the courses, and plates are invariably cold. We have *bouillon* often; I do not like it, but I do like a soup we have with sausages in it. One national dish is made of a kind of force-meat wrapped in vine leaves and eaten with sour cream. A sweetmeat made of vermicelli and sugar is nice. We frequently have fish, carp as a rule. I do not wonder the old monks kept them in ponds ready to catch when they wanted them: they knew what was good. Once we had a fish with an

unpronounceable, unspellable name that had jelly instead of bones, a comfortable sort of fish.

Tea is made of China tea in a *samovar*, and is generally very weak and hot; we drink milk in ours, but most Rumanians drink it *à la russe*. Oscar likes his with so much sugar in it that the last lump sticks out at the top like a miniature iceberg. The milk is boiled as soon as it comes into the house, as otherwise it would not keep. Butter is not good, and often quite white. Bread is like French bread, excellent in its way, but rather apt to be all holes and crusts! Meat is cheap and indifferent; lamb is eaten young, while the bones are still gristle, and cooked as we have it here is "tasty" and rich. Poultry is cheap and somewhat muscular.

I was promised a great treat one day: salmon for dinner. When it came to table it was raw, and the Goldschmidts were surprised I would not eat it. Of course caviare is fresh and excellent, but I am of the million.

We have flowers on the table sometimes, but it is not usual here. In fact, there is a lack of flower-shops; even at funerals the wreaths sent are artificial. Surely tin flowers are wanting in

sentiment, so I suppose they are sent in compliment; certainly they can have no religious meaning.

Madame Goldschmidt gives small dinner-parties sometimes, but evening parties are usual; we had one last night. The guests arrived about 9.30 to 10. The women were not *décolletées*, silk blouses and lace collarettes seemed as much in favour as at a village party at home. Music and poker are the chief amusements of Madame's guests; she plays poker; he, the piano.

Soon after the guests arrive they are handed cold water in long-stemmed glasses, and glass plates of *dulchasta*, literally "sweet things," a kind of preserved fruit, very sweet, which you would say was only fit for babes. Last night I heard a man say the raspberry *dulchasta* tasted like wood and sugar. By the way, this same man told me that "my husband has just had a baby." I congratulated him on the interesting event, and tried to smother Irma, who was in fits of laughter.

At midnight, tea without milk is served, and cake; not plain "English cake," but wonderful affairs with cream and chocolate, or sometimes pistachio; this last is best of all.

What a long letter I have written to you with "mine own hand"! Your next might be as long with advantage. I am sure you are too kind to be long vexed with me for refusing to marry you, and too magnanimous to visit it on me in any way. It is far better we should part for a time—we know each other too well, after twelve years spent in the same house. I cannot go on living at Talwood since Aunt Augusta's death; neither can I consent to your turning out on my account. No, Edmund, I feel sure my plan is a good one; I am widening my borders, enlarging my sympathies. If I do feel a bit lonely sometimes, most of us are that wherever we are. I could not be treated with more kindness and consideration than I am here; it will be my own fault or misfortune if I cannot make myself happy.

Always your affectionate cousin,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER II

Bukarest.

My dear Edmund,

Have you ever lived in a house where you differed in everything from those you lived with? I expect not. Important country squires with large incomes have not the opportunities and experiences which I am enjoying now, and which I find extremely interesting.

For instance, you have thought one way all your life, you enunciate your ideas. Behold! your listener entirely disagrees with you, perhaps puts forth opposite opinions. This is surprising, but salutary. After all, there is no reason why you should be in the right any more than he or she is; you revise your opinions in the new light thrown on them and, gaining both from the old and the new ideas, come, perhaps, to a more correct conclusion than you have done before. An open mind, that is what is wanted.

My last experience is—rose jam! Have you ever tasted it? If you are as good as you should

be, and write me many fascinating and lengthy letters, I will, perhaps, send you some.

We prepared the flowers this morning. I wonder if I can picture the scene for you.

Imagine a pretty town garden flooded with sunshine under a clear blue sky. In the shade of a tall acacia tree, heavy with graceful chains of white blossom, stands a large wooden table, piled high with pink roses. They smell deliciously—I do not know their own particular name—they have loose petals and yellow hearts. Madame Goldschmidt is sitting in a wicker chair the colour of red sealing-wax; she wears a mauve dress, much beflounced. Regina, the housekeeper, is bargaining with the rose-vendor, who stands by, weighing out more roses in large brass scales. He wears a kind of glorified pyjamas, white, with edgings of narrow scarlet embroidery. His feet are bare. His face is brown and well-featured; he wears a round black hat on his close-cropped head, a red rose is stuck jauntily over one ear. Can you see it all?

Madame looked up as I went down the balcony steps.

"We are going to make rose jam," she said. "Come and help us, Nanna."

"Rose jam," I thought, "a food for fairies."

It seemed quite cruel as I watched Madame take up her scissors and cut the yellow heart out of a rose; she added the petals to the fragrant heap on the table, and threw the heart away.

Regina dismissed the man. He adjusted the yoke to which his flat baskets were attached and padded out, after giving me a curious glance. As we sat, we could hear the clang of the tram bells in the road near; a bird in a cage at the old priest's opposite kept up a perpetual "Pic-pa-lac." We exchanged remarks; occasionally Madame rose in a stately way—she is generally stately—to scream orders in German through a window in the basement, where I afterwards discovered the cook was busy. Little Mella sat on the path and made mud-pies in a wonderful collection of red pots and pans.

From different parts of the garden came the sound of voices—you can have no idea what a number of professors we have here. Down the alley near the front gate Irma was having her Rumanian lesson. The Professor is a short-made man with dirty finger-nails. He works hard, is married, and has two little boys to whom he is

devoted. He loves his tea; he frequently spills it in the saucer and messes it about, then gets very hot, and wipes a perspiring forehead with a sad-coloured handkerchief. He is not an attractive-looking person, but is very good-natured. Yesterday he read me in English "To be or not to be." He could not understand one word of what he read, so the effect was funny. He was very pleased with his performance; so was I.

In the vine pergola, where later the grapes will hang in long bunches, sat Clara and Monsieur Androvsky. From where I sat I could see his white well-shaped hand, as he tried to keep the flies from his bald head; he has a well-kept beard, and speaks in a refined way. I think he teaches German literature and history and is considered an able teacher. He and I converse occasionally —converse is the right word, talk is far too frivolous! French is our medium of conversation; neither of us speaks it fluently, and our accents are our own. Still we manage to discuss Shakespeare, whose plays he has studied in his own language and admires extremely.

Oscar, the tall schoolboy, sat somewhere behind me; he was being coached in French

literature by a supremely elegant long-waisted gentleman.

Now and then they all spoke together in a kind of chorus; the effect was very quaint, especially when mingled with the voice of the Pic-pa-lac and the music of a barrel organ.

Yes, we have those atrocities here. The other day I saw a young man passing down the road; he was dressed in a brightly embroidered coat and a shirt with the tails charmingly goffered in a frill outside his white trousers. He went by at a kind of trot, carrying his organ on his back; a friend ran close behind and turned the handle vigorously.

The Goldschmidts take great pains with their children's education, as you see; in fact the poor things seem to be for ever at their books. Besides those I have already mentioned, there are the piano professor, the violin master—this last a talkative and irascible person, naturally—and a Hebrew professor with longish black hair who comes to give occasional lessons.

Don't start, my dear Edmund, when I tell you these people are Jews. I was told the other day by some one that they are the best people here, they are well educated and respectable. They

are to be relied on to pay one's salary, which some of the Rumanians are not. I met a poor girl two days ago, a German *bonne*, who had two years' salary owing her, and did not like to give notice, as she might forfeit it all. I advised her to go to her Consul, who will probably do his best for her.

Every one is kindness itself to me, so you need not be anxious. Life is pleasant here, and I shall grow used to it.

I have just tasted a pot of last year's rose jam. Such a disappointment! It tastes of cold cream.

Yours,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER III

Bukarest.

My dear Edmund,

"I can't see with mine eyes, Nanna! I can't see with mine eyes!" Mella woke me in the early hours of the morning with this melancholy cry.

It only meant that the lamp had gone out; she always thinks something has happened to her if it is dark, and is terribly frightened.

The said lamp is one of my lesser worries. It consists of half a tumbler of water "topped" with an inch or so of vile-smelling oil made from rape seed; a tiny tin lamp with a cotton wick floats on it. I once suggested night-lights. I was told they would cost threepence a night, the lamp less than one penny; even a poor arithmetician like myself can see the saving here. It is thus that Jews grow rich. You must not think them ungenerous, quite the contrary; they only refuse to pay three times more than is necessary.

We have on the nursery table a wonderful Russian table-cloth; at each corner it has a sledge and horses worked in cross-stitch in red and black cotton. Irma has upset the lamp over it twice. I know what you want to say, so hasten to inform you that I now place the loathèd thing on the wash-stand, where it flickers all night, unless—well, unless it doesn't. There never seems any reason for its extinction.

The habit of living so much in your bedroom strikes an Englishwoman as curious, particularly in a house which has no less than six large sitting-rooms: the study, upstairs *salon*, downstairs ditto, furnished hall, dining- and billiard-rooms; besides Dr. Goldschmidt's room. Our nursery is a fine room facing south; it has a large window with three lights and four doors. One leads on to the balcony, large double doors into the study, and doors into the passage and Clara's bedroom. It has a parquet floor with a large Turkey mat, three beds, wardrobe, etc., a table and several chairs. The paper is blue, with one or two pictures; the window is draped with Nottingham lace curtains—they may be German for aught I know.

Mella is a dear little person; she knows about

thirty songs in English, French and German; she wakes early in the morning as fresh as a daisy, and loves to sing them all through in an unusually powerful voice. Nanna does not allow the concert to begin until six o'clock.

Mella talks only English, and she makes the same mistakes as an English child does, such as "bemember" and so on. She is loving, hot-tempered, and engaging; she adores flowers, and will sit arranging them by the hour; she is fond of painting. I made her a little painting jacket of blue print, in which she looks very sweet, and the first time she put it on the whole household came to admire. She enjoys herself immensely, daubing herself and the paper with huge smudges of "honey paints."

Sometimes she fancies a little sewing, so she sits very close to me in her high chair, with the little table in front of it, and does some remarkable patchwork with an enormous needle.

When first I came she was very sallow, and no wonder, as she was provided with a five-course dinner every night. I begged Madame Goldschmidt to allow her nothing but one wholesome dish. The result is that her cheeks are already

growing pink, and with her very curly hair she makes a pretty picture.

Mella and I spend most of our time out of doors. We take Irma with us when the poor child is free of Professors. The latter is a funny child and rather vague; she has a habit of stopping in the middle of the road to look about, so I often personally conduct her across it by her long pigtail.

One of our favourite resorts is the Cismegiu Garden, which lies about ten minutes' walk from here. Mella goes in her mail-cart, sitting in state with an awning over her head, and the red pots and pans for mud pies at her feet.

Our way lies across the Dambovitza. Don't be startled, it's only the river that runs through Bukarest; and I should think one of the most uninteresting streams in the world, as it is like a wide ditch, with high, steep banks covered with grass and a few flowering nettles. Time was when it meandered slowly through the flat marshy ground that surrounded Bukarest; when the snow melted in the great mountain range to the north-west it flooded the neighbouring country with dirty water and malarial germs. It is a river quite impossible to poetize over, unless

one wrote a sonnet to its lost freedom. A path runs each side of the banks railed off and planted with lime and catalpa trees, both flowering now, and honey sweet; for the sake of the shade and fragrance, these walks are popular with us in hot weather.

We cross the bridge where the trams go, and turn down the road past the barracks of the *pompiers*. Close to these is a piece of waste ground which we can cross in dry weather. There are a few wooden huts built here, on the slope of which women sit all day and make remarks on the passers-by. They wear flowers in their wonderfully dressed hair, flowing garments of many colours with lace yokes and flounces, and paddle with bare feet in the warm dust. The sentry at the barrack gate has a much more amusing time than he at St. James's, as he lolls comfortably against the side of his sentry-box and gazes about him.

Along the road in front of him are little stalls, at which his comrades seem to stand and munch all day long. They eat small black sausages smelling of garlic; they hold them on the end of a fork, and dip them at intervals, end-on, into a plate full of something that has the appearance

of red lead. Sometimes they can only rise to bread and onions, or indulge in a pennyworth of rahat lakoum. This they buy from the man at the corner. He is dressed in blue linen, with a dull red sash round his waist; as he is slight and graceful, he makes a lovely picture. His tray hangs from his neck, its red and yellow lumps of sweetmeat powdered with sugar; on the ground beside him stands his wooden water-jug, bound with brass, that throws back the sunshine.

When Mella and I get hungry we buy bread baked in rings like bangles and bumpy with millet seed. We eat what we want and throw the rest to the fishes in the pond, or the frogs.

These frogs make the loudest noise for their size of any animal I have met. They lie, hundreds of them, just under the water, with their eyes bulging above, or they swim about, puffing out their cheeks like miniature balloons at every stroke.

The garden is prettily laid out with walks and flower-beds; a broad path runs right through the middle, bordered on either side with black poplars. There is a bandstand, an artificial

mound, a cascade with no water in it. There are plenty of trees—weeping willows round the lake, chestnuts in flower both pink and white. And fifty years ago it was a marsh, haunted by wild duck!

Mella finds a place where she can get some sand to make pies, or she picks flowers, leaning over the low railing and presenting herself upside down to the passers-by. I sit on the nearest bench with my work and newspapers.

Of course people talk to me, but at present nothing unpleasant has occurred. A day or two ago an elderly gentleman of most respectable mien was sharing my seat, and entered into conversation. He spoke English carefully and well; and we had a most interesting talk about Browning and Tennyson. He knew the works of both poets better than I did, by the way.

When at last he rose to go he made a deep bow. He said:

"Thank you, mademoiselle, for your most interesting conversation."

I arose, and returned the bow as gracefully as I could, scattering cotton, scissors, etc., in all directions.

"I, too, monsieur, have been most interested."

Irma, who was with us that morning, was much impressed.

Besides this gentleman, I talk with a German lady of sorts. She is a stout, comely woman, who knits while she talks; she wears a bodice and skirt that do not match. She has no English, I no German, so we converse in French, such as it is! She tells me that she is going to be married in September to a Rumanian ten years younger than herself, and is awfully pleased that he should have chosen her when he might have married a younger woman.

I murmur how fortunate he is, but suspect her of savings.

Still, I think she is a person of some force of character. In her last situation her employer hit her with an umbrella. I do not know the reason of the assault, or if there was one. Madame, my friend, retaliated by knocking the aggressor into a puddle on the roadway. Madame seemed surprised and a little hurt that she was given notice the next day.

Two swans haunt the lake or pond; they are fond of walking on the grass amongst the hooded crows and rooks, screaming and flapping their wings at the little mongrel dogs that frequent

the place. A swan ashore is a pathetic sight. In the middle of the garden, and near enough to the lake to be reflected in the still water, is a little empty church. I suppose it was there before the garden was made.

It is quite intact except for the windows, which have no glass; it has a squat tower with a quaint mushroom roof decorated with rough carving and paintings in red and white under the wide eaves. I weave romances about it as I sit at work, as I used about the old tower in Talwood Forest.

I had a letter from the rectoress last week, telling me all the home news—I still call Talwood "home," you see—among other items she mentions that The Hollies has been taken by a widow with a pretty daughter. A most dangerous combination! She further tells me that the Squire of Talwood spends much of his time playing lawn-tennis with the said pretty daughter. This is as it should be. Go in and prosper, my dear Squire.

It has been raining to-day; that is why you are honoured with this lengthy screed. I am writing in the nursery, with the windows open, and the delicious smell of wet earth coming in from the garden.

Mella is painting, with her chair drawn as close to mine as she can get it. Guttural sounds from the study proclaim the presence of Monsieur Dulberger.

Just now Dr. Goldschmidt came in, a volume of Browning's love poems in his hand; he read them aloud with great emphasis, stopping now and again to expectorate into the receiver of the wash-stand. He reads very well, and I was enjoying the poetry when Madame Goldschmidt arrived, full of irritation over some misdemeanour of Oscar, the schoolboy. A short altercation followed. You know the heated animation with which foreigners conduct the smallest discussion? The short storm calmed—Madame sailed away, and the doctor finished his reading.

Irma has been learning "The Soldier's Dream" lately. She recites "The 'Buggles' sang truce" with some pathos.

Six o'clock and Mella's bedtime. So good-bye.

Yours,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER IV

Bukarest.

My dear Edmund,

Such asseverations are unnecessary! You need not be so vexed with me, of course I believe what you say. Only I want you to understand that as far as I am concerned you are free to order your life as you will. But—shall I confess? —I *am* a little pleased that it is the new curate that haunts The Hollies and not Talwood's squire.

You ask me how I spend my evenings. Just now in a quiet, somewhat sleepy manner, sometimes in writing to a friend in the old country.

We have a delightful balcony—there are several to this great house, and ours is especially nice—the nursery and study have doors leading on to it and Mademoiselle's bedroom window overlooks it.

The view from it is not pretty but rather interesting. On the other side of the unmade road stands a little chapel with a burnished roof that

glitters like gold when the sun shines. No windows are visible from here; the wall is adorned with a couple of strange pictures. A big mulberry tree shades the little gate leading into the chapel-yard and to the priests' house behind. I wonder what the rector would think of the old pope. He wears a long and dirty robe—I can't tell whether it is meant to be black or brown—and white stockings, generally falling over his low shoes; his dirty hair is rolled in a bun at the nape of his neck, and he wears a black hat like an inverted muff. When first I came and the circus which lies next his house was still giving performances, he spent a large part of his time on the roof of an outhouse looking over the wall at the circus ladies. He looked quaint enough with the wind blowing his dirty grey beard and his yellow legs exposed to view.

Some of the popes are fine-made men, but they all look dirty and unkempt. I am told the parish priests are drawn from the peasant class and are quite illiterate, that they have no chance of promotion and are expected to marry when they get a cure.

Mademoiselle has just screamed through her

window that she is coming to join me. She is a trim little Frenchwoman with a voice like a peahen; she has green eyes, fair hair, and she tells me her complexion is "*mat.*" Sometimes when she is ready to go out she struts up and down before me.

"Do I not look well, Nanna? Do I not look well?"

She does too, in spite of her short stature and somewhat plump contours. Her clothes are put on so smartly, she looks trim and dainty.

She loves black coffee, cigarettes, and male society. She reads a novel a day, which she fetches from a library in the Calea Victoriei; it is generally rubbish, if not worse. As I write I can hear her singing shrilly: "Vous êtes si jolie!"

Here she comes. I put down my pen and laugh.

How shocked you would be if you could see her! She is in her nightgown, and she dances up and down the balcony, her little bare feet peeping out from the white hem, her short pigtail bobbing up and down as she sings: "Vous êtes si jolie!"

The secretary is passing down the road, I can

just see his head from where I sit. He calls her gently; she peeps over the balustrade, but as the voices of Madame Goldschmidt and her friends can be heard in the garden she dare not speak aloud to him, so she kisses her hand and falls to dancing again. The moon comes out above the tall houses and shines on her white feet.

"Nanna, I will not yet go to bed," she says, "I will have a black coffee and a cigarette."

She patters over the parquet floor of the study and down the long passage. Of course she has left the doors open, so I hear her screaming her orders to Agnès, the parlour-maid.

She patters back and sits on the door-step near me and talks of her past. In spite of her youth she seems a lady with a past, the stories of her Viennese life before she came here are not a little startling. She is nice to me, but hates the English as a nation, though, or rather because her mother was an Englishwoman.

Apparently the latter was a harsh, unsympathetic woman; her daughter speaks of her with downright hatred, as she tells me how her mother used to beat her when a child, how strict she was, how cold. I have no doubt the severe

English lady, or perhaps lady's-maid, found it very difficult to understand or control Mademoiselle Jeanne, who must have been a regular little devil. There is no other word for her, so do not think I am learning evil ways in these foreign parts.

Isn't there something mysterious in a great sleeping city? Mademoiselle is quiet at last. The voices in the garden are hushed. There was a pad of naked feet just now, some men went swiftly by; they were dressed in white and carried wide flat baskets yoked across the shoulders and piled high with purple fruit. The moon sent their shadows black and clear before them. The old priest is wandering about his yard carrying a lantern like a monster will-o'-the-wisp. What he wants it for in this brilliant moonlight I cannot imagine. The visitors have left the garden and are playing poker in the dining-room. I went and peeped at them over the balusters of the gallery which runs round the great hall. I had a glimpse of Madame Goldschmidt in black through the open door of the dining-room. I should say she is winning; she borrowed a franc from me this morning to bring her luck.

Dr. Goldschmidt is singing, and some of the younger people are chattering together. Madame asked me to go down if I felt so "dispoged," but I like my balcony under the stars too well to leave it.

There is Mademoiselle calling me; she has had her black coffee and is enjoying her cigarette, she wants me to read aloud to her "Picciola" —a book she has chosen in deference to my "innocence." The great clock has only this minute boomed ten, I can sit by her window in the moonlight while I read, so I think I will be amiable and go.

Good night, *mon ami.*

Yours,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER V

Bukarest.

My dear Edmund,

Has it ever struck you what a beautiful colour brown is? I never realized it myself till I came here. Perhaps the brilliant sunshine and clear skies make us long unconsciously for the soft sepia effects, while bright colour is grateful to us in our own misty land.

There is in this city a little cottage that I love. It stands exactly on the apex of a triangle made by two boulevards; it has some trees round it, mostly poplars, an overgrown garden with lilac bushes, and on the widest side a field of soft grass. This is full of wild flowers; Mella loves to get down from her mail-cart to pick the bind-weed which grows in profusion.

To-day while we were there, a shepherd arrived, leading his sheep. He walked over the bridge coming from the country, he carried a staff and looked worn and weary. When he saw this pleasant little oasis in a desert of dust

and trams, he drove in his brown sheep and flung himself face downwards on the grass. His clothes were soft brown, his dog companion, who curled himself up beside his master to sleep with one eye open, was brown too. Brown shadows fell across the sleeping man and his beasts, and the effect was soft and restful.

As we turned homewards an officer passed us riding his bicycle on the pavement; his sword was fastened up in front of his machine and flashed like a heliograph. He was smartly dressed in a pretty brown uniform.

Every one seems to wear uniforms here, even Oscar the schoolboy has gold lace on his cap. I saw a youth in a brilliantly striking one not long ago; on inquiry I found he was an hotel porter.

Why do Englishmen never kiss each other? I saw yesterday a charming sight in the Boulevard Carol—two smart grey-headed officers kissing each other affectionately, first one, then the other, then both together, with resounding smacks. One hand was on the sword-hilt, the other, gloved, waved gracefully in the air. It looked so much more impressive than the British hand-shake. Finally the stouter of the two officers

got into a cab that was waiting and drove off with a gay salute. Unfortunately, the effect of his departure was a little spoilt by a mistake of his driver. This gentleman was driving with his head over one shoulder; he almost ran into one of the country carts that lumber along the streets laden with timber and drawn by fawn-coloured oxen. There was a great deal of shouting and prancing; the stout officer looked apoplectic, and seemed to use a good deal of "langwidge" before the vehicles separated.

One of the curiosities of the place is the stacks of firewood, which stand round the houses and public buildings. Coal is £4 a ton, and therefore only used by the wealthy.

You ask me what flowers grow in the gardens. Most of those I have seen are familiar friends—roses, forget-me-nots, pansies, lilac, hyacinths; I do not remember seeing laburnums or primroses. Snowdrops and grape hyacinths are sold in the streets, so I conclude grow wild. Every evening this garden is laid under water, or the hot sun would shrivel everything up.

Of course the grape-vine pergola is un-English, and the tall mulberry trees.

We have all our meals in the garden now

except lunch, when it is too hot to sit out. I often think how droll we must look to the passer-by; indeed, some of the peasants do stand with their chins on the wooden paling to look at us. We have a table and chairs, and at dinner a tall lamp stands in the centre; it lights us up and throws the rest of the garden into deep shadow.

Mademoiselle refuses to come to dinner at present; she exists from tea till next morning's breakfast on black coffee and cigarettes. She has had a slight disagreement with Madame Goldschmidt. She says she goes to bed when I go to dine, but I hear whispers in a certain corner of the garden about which I do not inquire.

A big fig tree grows near the south side of the great front portico, it bears, or rather bore, but one fig. When I was in the garden this morning I noticed a dirty little gamin dancing about near the front gate, peeping up now and then at the *salon* window where Madame Goldschmidt was standing. At last he could resist no longer; he darted in, seized the solitary fig, and dashed out again into the road. He made a pause to gaze, I regret to say, with a broad grin at Madame,

who was gesticulating wildly, then made tracks, munching his fig with exaggerated enjoyment.

Mella and I went yesterday to see a picture exhibition. It was held in a room in the beautiful Athenée, a building in the Calea Victoriei, containing halls and concert-rooms. Mella looked charming in a white frock and a bonnet trimmed with pink-tipped daisies. She was most amusing at the exhibition, putting her little nose right into the pictures, as if she wanted to smell the paint, then calling to me to come and see what she admired. As she spoke English and I was in uniform, we attracted some attention, until she caught sight of some one laughing at her, when she grew shy and buried her face in my skirts.

The pictures were by Grigoresco, the famous Rumanian painter. He paints generally from native subjects. Most of the pictures I have seen have been alike: one peasant painted in with careful detail, surrounded with a few more roughly done, and a general effect of yellow soil and blue atmosphere. His drawing is rather weak.

The Rumanians say they are proud of Grigoresco; however, their pride did not make

them buy his works, as the good man has gone bankrupt, and is glad to sell his pictures for what he can get.

Mella and I are fond of nose-flattening; even if the shops are little worth seeing, they amuse us. Some of the old streets are picturesque and full of colour, as each shop has its particular sign; some are very quaint. One that we frequent has a padlock and chain, "La Lant" as a sign. I can't make out why, as we buy buttons, tape, needles, gloves, stockings, and such-like small things there. A grocer's shop near the market has a magnificent polar bear hanging over it. "La Papagal," a gorgeously painted macaw or parrot, hangs outside a shop for dress stuffs. This perhaps is not so inappropriate! Other shops have pictures of wild beasts, portraits of the King and Queen, and one execrable picture of the lovely Crown Princess. We saw her in the flesh the other day; she was driving a four-in-hand down the Boulevard Elizabeth; she wore a big hat covered with poppies. She is one of the Duke of Edinburgh's daughters, you remember.

Irma, Mella and I were choosing post cards as she passed; they were fastened all along the

wooden paling outside the Cismegiu Garden. They sell most fascinating ones here; the best drawn are from Hungary, the most improper from France.

Close by are bookstalls spread with numerous old paper-covered books. I often see an old pope hovering round them, carefully watched by the man who sits in the centre, like a big spider in his web. I daresay one might pick up an interesting old volume occasionally if one could read any of the languages. Sometimes I buy a few sweets from the itinerant vendors. Of course I can't ask in Rumanian, so I point and say "*Teroc*"—which means "please"—and hold up the coin I wish to spend; it is a doubtful pleasure, as they sell them at ten *bani*—a penny—a dozen or score and count them out with their dirty fingers.

Have I ever told you what beautiful rings Madame Goldschmidt has? One especially, a big sapphire mounted with diamonds, is lovely. A ruby one which was missing turned up in the nursery under the tablecloth; I put my hand on it when I was lighting the lamp. Between ourselves, I can't help wondering who put it there, and why.

I hear a sound of voices coming up the passage; Madame and Mademoiselle are having a slight difference and do not modulate their tones. The way the latter speaks to her employer is rather startling to English ears, and one no English lady would put up with.

These people are somewhat selfish, but good-natured in their own way. One wet afternoon soon after I came here Mella and I amused ourselves with rolling a croquet ball to each other across the nursery floor; you can imagine the noise below. Later in the evening I discovered Dr. Goldschmidt's bureau was exactly underneath, and he had borne it smilingly.

I hear the study door slam, Madame is departing; she has a poker-party this evening at her sister-in-law's. Fancy wasting these lovely nights in a hot, gas-lighted drawing-room! No, the balcony for me, the blue starred sky, even the barrel-organ at the street corner.

Ah! Here comes Mademoiselle Duval in full talk; no more writing to-night.

Yes, a word or two more. She has given me her diary to read, unasked; it is a human document surprising to my well-regulated mind. She is in love with some one. Who? Her

description of the "beloved object," seen, I suppose, through Cupid's spectacles, gives me no clue. The whole is a revelation to the respectable young woman who has the honour to be your friend,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER VI

Bukarest.

My dear Edmund,

Do not be insular, I implore you! Of course you think green meadows and red and white cattle superior to town oases and brown sheep; of course you prefer horses to oxen; but you must allow the latter are picturesque, even if their carts are solid and clumsy; and the pretty costumed peasant beside them, with his slender figure and fine eyes, has decidedly the advantage of Hodge!

I could not help laughing yesterday when I met a country gentleman driving into town, and compared his carriage to the description you had given me of your new turn-out. The carriage was driving up the Calea Victoriei, the most fashionable street; it was drawn by three leggy horses abreast, a foal ran whinnying alongside. The harness was tied with rope; behind the huge shabby old carriage was an immense bundle of hay, fodder for the beasts as long as

they were in the capital. The carriage was covered with dust, and looked as if it had been painted in the last century. A large bell hung from the neck of one of the horses; this was to warn people to get out of the way as the vehicle bumped along the narrow country roads.

We see some good Russian horses here, and the cavalry is well mounted. The public victorias are generally excellently horsed; the coachman holds a rein in each hand and drives after the manner of Jehu; he does not slacken speed at a corner, but whirls round it after giving a warning howl, which startles his fare more effectually than it warns the passer-by.

The driver wears a fine blue or black velvet pelisse, trimmed with quantities of little metal buttons, and lined in cold weather with sheepskin. He wears a sheepskin cap drawn over the ears in winter, which is replaced during the summer by a peaked cap; round his stout waist he frequently twists a bright-coloured sash with fringed ends.

We give no directions when we mount the cab, but pull the left and right ends of the sash to signify which way we wish to turn. This custom is a little puzzling to strangers who don't

know the way. Madame Goldschmidt varies this custom by poking the man on the shoulder with her sunshade, which is equally effective. These drivers are Russians, members of the Lipovan sect which was turned out of Russia; they have such curious rules and regulations for their married lives that I cannot write them here.

Last week I was invited to spend an evening at the chaplain's—he is a widower with two pretty daughters—permission was given, so André called a cab and Regina gave the driver instructions. It was a gloomy night with fine rain. The coachman, who looked even stouter than they usually do in the dim light, spent his time leaning over the back of the box asking me questions. I had no idea what he was saying, so always answered "*Da, da,*" which I imagine to be the Rumanian of "yes." The odd thing is that I arrived safely at my destination and had a pleasant evening.

There are electric trams running through many of the streets regardless of their width, or rather want of width. Some of the newer streets are still unfinished. Dr. Goldschmidt tells me the town was much overbuilt during

BOULEVARD ELIZABETH

the boom of a few years ago, and there are many empty houses with wide grassy places between them. We saw a white rabbit feeding in one of them, loping happily from one tuft of grass to another regardless of the tram-bells and other town noises. Mella was delighted, and stood with her little face pressed through a broken paling; she almost cried when I was obliged to drag her away from the fascinating sight. Even *she* could not fear a pink-eyed bunny!

The same day we met a herd of pigs; I mistook them for donkeys, they stand so high and have such long ears and tails; their hairy bodies are thin and muscular and they trot along quickly. Nevertheless, they provide excellent hams, perhaps so much exercise makes them tender. These are cooked with their black skins on in native red wine and served hot—the Goldschmidt family makes one look very small, Jews though they be!—I believe it's the amount of acorns they eat which makes their flesh so sweet and juicy. They live in droves on the outskirts of the great oak woods which surround many of the large estates in the interior of the provinces.

In the side streets of Bukarest some people

keep ducks and fowls in their back yards. I have seen a piggy also sharing the dirty trough of water and snorting around the mixed feeding. Some of the little houses turn their backs, with Oriental coyness, to the road; these are usually one-storied, and have tidy yards. The walls are white, the outside shutters green, large tubs of pink oleanders stand in front. I wonder where they put them during the winter frosts? These houses look very pretty, and one can imagine charming romances going on behind the neat railings; as a matter of fact, the Rumanians are both practical and material, and romance is rare.

Please thank the rector for his kind inquiries as to my spiritual welfare. There is an English service held in a big hall in the Lutheran school all the winter and spring; it is reverent and quiet. The chaplain is a kindly old man, rather deaf. His sermons are dull. A young man plays an harmonium with as much spirit as that bored instrument permits, and we sing psalms and hymns lustily. The Crown Princess generally comes; two chairs and a piece of crimson carpet are always put ready for her and her lady-in-waiting. It is a pleasure to see her, she is so

pretty and well-dressed, and her church deportment most edifying.

The chaplain is anxious to get a little church built, but funds are not forthcoming. Money would be wanted not only for building, but for upkeep as well, and the English community is small and poor. It consists chiefly of English governesses. The British Minister's wife is a charming woman and kindly; she has G.F.S. parties for tea and needlework. I love going, she puts on no airs, and treats us all so pleasantly; it seems like a little bit of England.

Of course I get stared at and spoken to in the streets, my dear Edmund, any woman who walks alone must expect it here. If you look indifferent and only walk where there are plenty of people, there is no danger. I rather enjoy it myself, bold creature that I am!

However, I do not mould my behaviour on Mademoiselle's! When she was out yesterday she declared she felt faint, and sank down to rest on one of the chairs outside the café at the corner of the Calea Victoriei. An officer—of course in uniform—with admiration in his eyes and a graceful bow, offered his assistance, and would not be gainsaid. Thus runs her version.

From my knowledge of her, she probably sat down at his table, attracted by his manly form and well-fitting uniform, and entered into lively converse.

I have not yet discovered the "Object of her affections"; no one I have seen or met answers to her descriptions. Perchance he is still in her imagination.

A great deal of discussion goes on as to where we shall go during the summer heat. The family generally migrate to Sinaia, the Simla of Rumania, a beautiful place in the Carpathians. This year Madame Goldschmidt thinks a change would be both beneficial and agreeable. However, as every one seems to fancy a different place I think it likely we may go to Sinaia after all. The date of our departure has been altered three times already. A large trunk has been brought into the nursery; it is so deep I nearly fall in when I try to pack, I have to balance my—my waist on the edge to reach the bottom. I spend much thought over what clothes to take.

Do you know, I laughed out loud when I had written that? I could actually see your face lengthen at the mention of clothes; you must allow I have spared you hitherto in the midst

of much temptation. In a country where the People (with a big P) are all in fancy dress, I have practised great self-denial.

The upper "succles" get their garments from Paris and dress uncommonly well. The men always look wrong somehow, I can't tell why, unless it is their long tie-ends or the habit they have of carrying their hats in their hands on warm days.

I really must describe the appearance of two peasants I saw dressed for a *festa*. They wore wax-tight linen trousers, sleeveless jackets of sheep's leather embroidered in many-coloured wools, white shirts, so much starched and goffered that they stood out below the waist like an Elizabethan ruff in the wrong place. Round black felt hats cocked up with a rose over the right ear gave a charming finish to their costumes.

I often think it a pity the English have given up wearing any national dress, in spite of Mr. Spectator, who says it leads to class distinction. By the way, they are very democratic here, all titles, save those of the Royal Family, are forbidden. There is a Parliament which sits in an insignificant building near the Mitropolia or

Cathedral. I saw the Prime Minister one day, a sturdy little man with a dark beard. They tell me he, Sturdza, has been responsible for the admirable finance of the Government, and that it is owing to him as much as to the King that Rumania has prospered so wonderfully since she became her own mistress.

King Carol himself is not much to look at; he, too, is a small dark-bearded man with a great forehead. The King drives good horses, his coachmen wear the quaintest livery; a little way off it looks like crazy patchwork on a scarlet ground.

You know probably that King Carol was Karl von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, the Roman Catholic Hohenzollerns. When he was elected Prince of the newly formed country in 1866 he was captain of the 2nd Regiment of Dragoon Guards and was twenty-seven years old. A modern French writer who gives a moving if somewhat sentimental account of his arrival in Rumania declares that he has never recovered from home-sickness for the *Vaterland* and is rarely seen to smile. His wife is the famous Carmen Sylva. Do you remember the pretty picture we had of her in the schoolroom? Her real name is

Elizabeth, daughter of the Princess of Wied, an extraordinary old lady who scandal declares to be too fond of her valet. I didn't know Princesses had valets! Queen Elizabeth is a fine musician as well as poet and romance writer, and has a kindly lovable nature. They have no children, as they lost their only daughter. The Crown Prince is the King's nephew and his wife is of course the lovely Marie of Edinburgh and Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. They have a fine family, so Rumania is well provided with Royalties, that is, if they stick to them and do not drive them away as they did General Couza, the first elected ruler of the united Provinces. It is a curious problem that a people should be more content under an alien sovereign than under one of their own kith and kin. Has it anything to do with the mixed blood that runs in their veins? Romans, Turks, Huns, Greeks, Tartars, all have left their mark in the country.

The Royal Palace is ugly; it is a long two-storied house of the usual white stucco with a small garden. It faces the Calea Victoriei.

It is, however, much improved since the day when Karl von Hohenzollern took possession of it. As he entered Bukarest he noticed a guard

of honour in front of a dismal-looking house. "What is this house?" he asked, and General Golesco replied, "It is the Palace." Under the windows gipsies were camping and pigs wallowing in the mud. No wonder the poor man regretted his German home!

His Parliament consists of two chambers. The Senate or Upper Chamber has one hundred and twenty members elected for eight years, and the Chamber of Deputies one hundred and eighty-three members who are elected for four years. Senators must have reached the ripe age of forty; Deputies may serve their country at twenty-five. Election is by direct vote and members are paid. The King has the power of veto. The executive consists of a council of eight Ministers presided over by a Prime Minister. I did not notice any great reverence shown at the mention of their Parliament, in fact Dr. Goldschmidt spoke rather contemptuously of "vestry meetings."

I was so amazed at a Rumanian understanding and applying the term that I quite forgot to ask intelligent questions as to the why and wherefore.

As Mella and I were pacing homewards this

morning, we passed such a funny old pope. He had on the usual dirty robes and muff-like hat; he was riding a pony with such short legs that he was quite doubled up, his knees hitting his nose when he trotted, at least, it looked as if they did. His feet were thrust well into wooden stirrups, and he had the complacent expression of a well-mounted cavalier.

As we mounted the steps to the anteroom from the front door we met Mademoiselle Duval ready for the street. She peacocked around.

"Do I look well, Nanna?" she cried.

She did, and thought so too.

"I am going out with a friend," she added, "and will not be home till late."

I may mention Dr. and Madame Goldschmidt were spending the day in the country.

I had the curiosity to run on to our balcony to see if I could discover the "friend." I saw Mademoiselle tripping down the dusty road, swaggering from the waist and turning her head from side to side like a bird. She joined a figure close to the circus entrance just as far as I could see, and it looked uncommonly like the secretary, can he be the man after all? Yet I seem to remember something in the diary about the proportions of

Hercules, and Monsieur Alcalay is about five feet four inches.

As I lingered, a woman dashed round the gate-post, almost striking her head against it in her hurry. The sun shone straight into her face; it was so convulsed with passion that I hardly recognized it. I knew the bright blue blouse, it belonged to Amalia, the handsome kitchen-maid. I wonder what was the matter with her?

Clara is out with relations; Oscar is spending the day with friends. I can't think how the boys amuse themselves, they certainly never play cricket like English boys. Tennis and croquet a little, and Oscar likes billiards. It is played here on French tables minus pockets. I am told there is a national ball game that bears a resemblance to cricket; I don't know its name and have never seen it played.

This is a dull letter, I fear, from a dull person. The hot weather, and perhaps the stagnant air, try an island woman. I suppose in no part of England can one be so far from salt water as Bukarest is from the Black Sea.

Here is Irma, looking very weary after a day's lessons varied only with violin practice. She is

working for a Government exam. that all the children have to pass before a certain age. I must take her for a breath of fresh air, poor child.

Yours as ever,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

P.S.—I open this to say that we are going to Sinaia next week; Madame Goldschmidt took a villa for us to-day.

LETTER VII

Sinaia.

My dear Edmund,

Your letter was forwarded to me here, many thanks for it. I am glad to hear that you are going to Scotland as usual; I shall think of you tramping through the knee-high heather on your beloved moors, the soft Scotch mist lying on birch and fir and hiding the grey heads of the distant bens. You, who are so fond of mountains, would love this place; it is beautiful.

Can you tell me why foreign railway stations run so short of platforms? Why is one made to stumble over yards of rails while engines whistle madly round one? We *should* make a fuss if we were turned out on the chaos of lines at St. Pancras or Liverpool Street! These remarks are called forth by our journey here last Tuesday. We left Bukarest at 2.30, Madame Goldschmidt, Mademoiselle Duval, the three girls, and myself.

Dr. Goldschmidt has gone to amuse himself

elsewhere. Regina has been left to mind the house in Bukarest. Oscar has gone to England to improve himself in our language: he wants improving. The maids left by an earlier train to get things ready for us in the villa Madame has hired for two or three months. I may observe nothing *was* ready when we got there.

Bukarest gets unbearably hot in July and August, and all who can afford it leave for cooler climes.

The train did not go so quickly but we could see the great wild rose-bushes covered with pinky blossoms on either side the railway track. The latter first crosses the wide plain that, flat and fertile, stretches eastward to the Black Sea. We stopped at Ploesti; you remember where I tried to appease my hunger with a stony sandwich? The family were much amused at my mistaking the Rumanian for "exit" as the name of the station!

Ploesti has a population of over 45,000 people and is a very prosperous town. It is a very old city rejuvenated, and like most Rumanian towns extends over a large tract of land. It has a splendid Lycée which has cost the country more than a million francs. We crossed the ugly

petroleum country where tall black scaffolding betrays the whereabouts of each well. I am told the companies which run them are chiefly English and American; of course Rockefeller is in them. The workmen are chiefly Italians, and there are many Scotch managers. The Rumanian appears to have an invincible objection to manual labour.

Finally the train puffed slowly up through the sandy foot-hills to the great Carpathian range, as my old Geography has it; you remember I crossed them on my way here via Predeal? The sun was shining when we first saw them, and they looked splendid against a cobalt sky.

We reached Sinaia about six, tired and thirsty, especially Mella, who, poor little soul, had been frightened at the tunnels and cried lustily all through them, "Nanna, I can't see with mine eyes!" Irma was of course sea-sick, I mean train-sick, which is just what she would be; Mademoiselle walked up and down the corridor alternately scolding Irma and making eyes at the male passengers. Madame Goldschmidt found a friend with whom she chatted unceasingly. We hoped for tea; in vain, we did not get it.

Sinaia is a village of villas built in a narrow

valley that runs north and south; the consequence is it gets little sun, as the mountains are very high on the western side. It is about three thousand feet above sea-level. The villas are built round a small park and straggle along either side of a wide boulevard for about half a mile, when two roads branch off. The houses stretch up to the great woods behind them; they are built like Swiss chalets and French country-houses. Some have little streams bubbling through their grounds in a great hurry to reach the Prahova. A few of the villas are private property, others are to let. Won't you take one and come and shoot bears? They really do come sometimes after mulberries. I wonder why they do, as the mulberries are white ones and very nasty.

We have not a very engaging abode; the Goldschmidts made up their minds so late that all the nice places were taken.

It is a small villa in two flats; we have the lower one, and can hear all that goes on above us, so I conclude that the inhabitants of the upper regions can hear all that goes on below them. I feel sorry for them. The house stands in an untidy piece of ground planted with a few

shrubs; a kiosk stands to one side, and an ancient bench is near the gate which leads to the Strada Isvor. On exploring, we found at the back an untidy little garden surrounded with grey walls and the home of a cat and three kittens. Irma says they never saw any cats until I came, now they are always meeting them.

To the left of us stands a small house with a pretty garden. Here dwells a man whose name I cannot spell, much less pronounce! He is the chief caricaturist of the comic papers. He has a clever, sad face. He spends much time in the garden looking at papers. Query, do they contain his own drawings? He is generally surrounded by his womenfolk. No, Edmund, this does not account for his melancholy, albeit they are stout and far from prepossessing.

On our other side is a field with an uninhabited house at one end. A lonely cow wanders about this field; she had a bell with a charming note round her neck which took my fancy, so I sent Amalia to bargain for it, and got it for the sum of one franc. At present I intend it for you, but pray don't set your young affections upon it as, being a woman, I may change my mind. By the way, do men never change theirs? History,

both private and public, suggests that they do—now and then.

Behind our villa in the same yard, in fact almost touching the back veranda, is a smaller house. This contains a large room for the servants and the quarters of the caretakers or owners, a man and his wife. The woman is ugly enough to be interesting; she has a dark complexion, and her nose is almost flat on her face. A small boy who lodged here once offended her very much. He pretended to look for something before her, hunting about with great energy. She asked what he was looking for. "Your nose!" he replied. Her husband is an ancient person said to be a hundred years old; I believe him to be about eighty. He sits all day in the narrow gallery in front of their house blinking with bleared eyes at the sun. I wonder what he thinks about all the time, or whether he thinks at all! I have seen him look at me, the tall strange foreigner, as if I puzzled him. I smile as amiably as I can at him, but we have no common language, so remain a mystery to each other; perhaps all the more interesting in consequence.

The flat contains a fair-sized *salon* with a door into the garden; a small dining-room, also with

a door into the garden, and which turns into Mademoiselle's bedroom at night. There are two more bedrooms at the back.

The kitchen is below, with large wooden doors, like a carriage house, and an unglazed window protected at night by wooden shutters. Here the old German cook presides and quarrels with Agnès and Amalia.

The latter displayed her opulent charms in such scanty attire in the mornings that I asked Clara to tell her she must wear something more suitable. She is a handsome wench, with a bold manner.

We eat most of our meals in the kiosk, and are always ready for them, this keen air gives us great appetites; Mella looks better already. We get delicious bread, good milk and butter. The peasants bring cheeses wrapped in pieces of bark and wood, also strawberries and raspberries, which we buy in wooden jugs ornamented with poker work, some very pretty.

The peasants and *boyards*, or small farmers, bring them in from the villages round, riding astride, men and women alike, upon their sorry ponies; sometimes with unfortunate cocks and

hens tied together by the feet and slung across the withers.

The mountains are beautiful; the woods cling to their steep sides almost to the top, then the gaunt grey heads appear sometimes out of a golden mist. We have frequent storms, which come on quickly on a day as fine and calm as an English June. Suddenly you hear the wind rushing through the forest, the branches bend before it, the storm-clouds gather, the thunder echoes with a hundred voices amongst the hills, the rain falls. Half an hour later the storm has passed on, the sun shines out; here and there a tree lies prostrate, a silent witness to its fury.

The river, called Prahova, turgid and foam-flecked, dashes over the rocks and races under the grey stone bridge. The meadows are full of lovely flowers; Mella is very happy picking them. We have found a delicate mauve scabious, huge purple and red thistles, trefoil pink and crimson, yellow vetchlings, ox-eyed daisies, lark-spur, monk's-hood, and, in the crevices of the rocks, dwarf gentian. Down by the many streams grow ferns, butterbur, and a ragged yellow flower whose name I don't know unless it is a kind of rudbeckia. The young people

here all learn scientific botany; they can tell you the different parts of a flower, but they do not know the name of any of the plants we see, or the name of any of the few birds. A cousin of the Goldschmidts is a first-rate botanist, as is also a German lady I have met with them. The Goldschmidts themselves care little for natural history of any kind; they seem to call "education," the knowledge of languages, literature and music.

You must be getting bored, so I must wind up this screed, though I warn you more descriptions will follow; this place is almost too picturesque. I regret that I neither sketch nor Kodak.

Madame Goldschmidt is going to Homburg shortly. She continues her poker-parties, and often begins playing at four in the afternoon. The mountains do not call to her, apparently, or the spirit of the woods.

I have been writing this on my knee in the park, while Irma and Mella amuse themselves with some little friends. In the intervals of writing and listening to the band, I talk to an old French "nanna." She has charge of a small boy, age two, name Nikola. He has a passion

for climbing, and has already damaged himself in his frequent falls, and is for all the world like a little monkey.

There is Mademoiselle Duval coming down the path from the Hotel Sinaia looking into the men's faces. Ah, she sees me! Farewell to peace. Mella has fallen, she howls lustily. Poor little girl, she has cut her knees on the fine flints which make up the path, so I must hasten to console.

Good-bye, dear friend,

Yrs.,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER VIII

Sinaia.

My dear Edmund,

So you don't like me to call you "friend"? Isn't it a little unkind when we have been friends ever since Aunt Augusta welcomed me to Talwood, a long-legged child of thirteen with a pigtail?

I am one of those people who believe that men and women can be friends, that is to say, *some* men and women! Probably most of us think we are among those that can, though I allow it must be easier when you are married, to some one else, I mean, of course, other people's husbands are often so attractive. I wonder why! Don't you?

They certainly are to Rumanians. From what I hear there seems to have been a general post amongst husbands and wives since society last met in Sinaia. It must make conversation rather laboured occasionally one would think. However, I suppose it's the kind of situation

one would get used to; and if by chance one was seated by the last husband, or last but one, talk happily about the "days that are no more."

A modern writer thinks that the tolerance which is a characteristic of modern Rumanians is one of the results of their mixed lineage. "Le pauvre" or "La pauvre" is all they say when Monsieur betrays his wife or Madame runs away with some one else! They appear to me to have nasty minds all the same, they readily think evil and their tongues speak it and spare no one, not even their chosen King and Queen.

Madame Goldschmidt told me that when she is away staying at the many watering places she frequents in search of health that she can always recognize a Rumanian. He saunters along looking at all the women as if they were ladies of a certain class. Rather a scathing remark!

So you don't find Scotland quite as delightful as usual, and the shooting people dull? What is the matter? Might I suggest a visit from the ladies of The Hollies, of course minus the curate; or invite the latter and "wipe his eye"? Is that the correct term?

We are quiet enough here. Madame Gold-

schmidt has gone to amuse herself at Homburg in the intervals of a cure. Mademoiselle Duval and I are left in charge; I have the money-bag.

Monsieur Alcalay has come up from Bukarest for a couple of days. A friend has lent him a motor, a big white one which makes a fiendish noise and has an appropriate smell. I saw the little secretary leaning over our gate this morning talking to Amalia; she gazed beamingly down on him, as he must be six inches shorter than she and considerably narrower.

Mademoiselle and Clara started this morning with a number of friends on a mountain excursion. You would have been amused to see the party start, that is, if you had had the patience to wait, as of course most of them were late and kept the poor little ponies waiting about for an hour or more. They all rode astride, as a side-saddle is unsafe on the narrow roads which skirt the precipices.

Mademoiselle Duval wore a plaid blouse, a short skirt, and a smart hat. Her legs are so short that they stuck out almost at right angles to her mount; she looked jolly and unsafe. As for Madame T., a Goldschmidt cousin, every

time her pony stopped she shot over his head, so I doubt if she will ever arrive at her destination —the little Pestera monastery.

Left to our own devices, Irma, Mella and I determined to go a long walk, so we took egg-sandwiches and biscuits and started along the road by the river.

The Prahova was low, tumbling noisily over boulders in its hurry to reach the Danube in the plain below.

The mountains closed in here. The thick covering of forest, chiefly beech and conifer, moved slowly as the wind swept over it, and the grey head of monster Caraiman changed from gold to grey, from grey to gold again, as the cloud shadows passed over it.

I wheeled Mella in her mail-cart. It is a very light affair, and in this invigorating air one feels equal to anything, so don't frown over the idea; her little legs cannot carry her far. Irma trudged beside me, stopping now and again to pick the little yellow pansies that grew in numbers by the roadside.

We passed pretty little cottages; they all had verandas, which were clean and tidy, with the family bedding airing on them. Leggy cocks

and hens pecked about the yards and "policies." Some of the houses had large bushes of green-stuff stuck over the doorways; I have since asked what for, but have failed to find out. Some thirty or forty yards from the building there was often a small walled garden, where dahlias, phlox and marigolds ran riot.

I suppose these homesteads belong to the *boyards*. There are several thousands in the kingdom who are making a comfortable living and adding much to the prosperity of the country. They were started on King Carol's initiative, and were helped financially by the Government.

During one of our many stoppages we saw a pathetic little procession pass by. A man walked first, carrying a tiny blue coffin on one shoulder, which was covered with white gauze embroidered with sequins—I wondered if it was the mother's wedding-veil—three carriages followed. In the first were two priests in gorgeous raiment; the others were full of black-robed mourners. Last of all, on foot, shuffling along the dusty road, came a poor old woman with red eyes and a very dirty handkerchief.

When she saw the last, Irma laughed.

We ate our sandwiches at the next halt; they made us very thirsty. Irma sat on one of the curious flat thistles that grow right down in the grass, and look old and dry, as if they had been forgotten and left there for ages.

A little farther on, we had to draw up again by the roadside to leave room for two great flocks of small straight-legged sheep. They were both brown and white, and were driven by peasants dressed in prettily embroidered clothes; the woman had a lovely blouse, gay with golden sequins. In the middle of the first flock two heavily-laden donkeys walked delicately, like Agag of old, though we will hope *their* end will be peace, not pieces like the aforesaid unfortunate gentleman.

Quite at the end of the procession were no less than nine dogs. They were like woolly bears with blunt noses and no tails worth mentioning; no doubt cousins of our bob-tailed sheep-dogs. Mella was much afraid of them. They certainly did look rather alarming, and she is quite unused to animals, as Madame Goldschmidt will not have them about the house.

We turned down a broad white road leading through another valley, but quite shut in with

wooded mountains. The river widened out into quiet pools; across the shallow ford a team of oxen staggered, dragging after them a cart laden with newly felled timber. The sun shone on them through the trees, patching the animals with sunshine and bringing out the russet tones in the rough bark. Hairy pigs with lengthy noses grunted and routled in the muddy banks, or rolled in the adjacent swamps. While we stood watching them and laughing at their antics, a great white motor scooted by with discordant bellowings, and left an evil smell behind it. We looked at the river, the fawn oxen and the black piggies, and decided we preferred God's gifts to man's inventions.

We made our way home along a forest path, mysterious and suggestive as are all woodland ways. Mella got quite frightened at the soft whispering among the leaves; she thought some one was hiding from us. I had to carry her while Irma wrestled with the mail-cart. We saw no birds or squirrels; and flowers only blossom on the outskirts where they can get sunshine.

As we came within sight of our own gate, a motor left it going towards the park and away

from us. I noticed a figure in a light blouse and hat lean over the gate for a minute, then walk quickly away. Later on, when Amalia passed the kiosk where we were having tea, she wore a blue blouse and hat. I am rather worried about this, as I feel responsible for the behaviour of the household while Madame Goldschmidt is away. We are in charge of Madame's sister-in-law and can go to her if anything occurs and we want her help. This is the kind of thing one feels uneasy about and is difficult to get at. However, I can't speak a word of Amalia's language, so must leave things to fate in the person of Madame Goldschmidt, who will be back again in a few weeks.

The children are both asleep in the nursery. The early twilight has come with a rumble of thunder round Caraiman. I wonder if the excursion party have reached Pestera Monastery, or are held up in some chilly mountain pass. I hear cook and Agnès quarrelling in the coach-house kitchen; the storm there is worse than on the hill-tops.

Soon old Cookie will come along and pour out a torrent of German, of which I shall barely understand a word. However, I shall look

intelligent, and say "*Ja, Ja!*" at intervals. This happens nearly every night. She retires looking quite satisfied; it's odd that she does, but so it is. Life is a puzzling thing, my dear Edmund.

With which "bromide" I will conclude, and remain

Your affectionate comrade,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER IX

Sinaia.

My dear Edmund,

Of course I might have known my sketchy descriptions would never satisfy you. Don't expect any statistics from me; I never remember figures and should certainly put them down all wrong. However, I think I can tell you a little about the peasant, and that little will probably disgust a model landlord like yourself.

Which reminds me I always meant to tell you that, after much thought, I have discovered your chief defect: you are a model person altogether! Do go and do something superlatively silly and, above all, write me a true account of what you do. Many people are stupid, though they don't always realize it; the power to be superlatively silly is only vouchsafed to the few. You are, perhaps, thinking that I belong to the elect, so we will leave the subject and return to that picturesque and somewhat dirty person, the Rumanian peasant.

He—or she—is born in a hovel with a mud floor; when quite tiny he is carried about by his mother looking like a brown-paper parcel, string and all. He is never bothered to have his face washed, and in some remote places his hair is left to grow as it pleases, so it becomes in time long and matted. He plays about on the filthy floor, eagerly devours meals of maize and beans, which vegetable matter will be his chief food through life. Maize is rather heating; it sometimes produces internal disease, which is not cured by a good deal of home-made brandy. When he is old enough the boy is compelled by law to attend school; as there are few schools in the country districts, the law is not always enforced. Later on, he works in the fields; he is seldom paid in cash—sixpence a day he considers riches—but is allowed a certain amount of ground, which he plants up for his own use.

The peasant seldom sees his landlord. The latter lets his country estate if he can; his one idea is to get as much money as he can and spend it in Bukarest or, still better, in Paris.

I am told Bulgars make the best farmers; Rumanians are lazy and prefer taking their ease in the cities.

Small muscular poultry swarm round the dwellings of the peasants and *boyards*. They collect their minute eggs for sale, and these are exported in quantities, chiefly to Great Britain. Country folk seem to have no amusement save an occasional fair or drunken bout.

Now and then the owner will take it into his head to spend a summer in his vast country-house; while he is there his tenants have to provide him with milk and butter, enough hay for eight horses, and unlimited poultry. He does nothing for them in return in the way of improving stock, etc. The breeds of sheep and cattle are poor; and the pigs owe their good flavour probably to the acorns they get in the forest. The native pony, as we see it here, is an ugly little beast, but wiry and enduring and capable of climbing like a cat.

When the country girl marries, she exchanges the twisted plaits of her own hair for the wifely kerchief which hangs down her back in a point. She probably adds to their scanty income by embroidering. This work is done on a kind of loose linen in cotton and sequins. The patterns are handed down from mother to daughter, and it is rare that a new one is invented. Some of

the work is very handsome. I often see women working by the roadside; once I noticed a girl whose blouse sleeves were entirely of sequins. A society of ladies does much to encourage this "home industry"; it has started a depot in the Calea Victoriei, where arrangements are made for the reception and disposal of the work.

The peasants are very superstitious. They belong as a rule to the Orthodox Church. Their popes are peasants themselves and do little to raise their flocks.

The soil of the country is peculiarly rich, so much so that in many places, notably the valley of the Danube, no manure is required. They also plough light.

A friend of mine gave me an amusing account of peasants buying a plough. They arrive in the morning, the father, mother and all the piccaninnies; they encamp in the yard where the ploughs—generally from McCormick's—are displayed. Here they stay the whole day, perhaps two or three days. Then they haggle over the price a day or two longer, and finally depart soberly with their purchase.

Rape and maize are the chief crops; these

depend a good deal on the amount of winter snow, as the rainfall is slight and the sun fierce.

The forests are immense, but are already growing smaller from the wasteful use of timber for firewood and the improvidence of the landlords, who fail to plant trees to replace those they have cut down.

I suppose the real wealth of the country lies in the petroleum wells, which appear inexhaustible.

Before I came here I read a good deal about the beauty of the inhabitants, but I cannot say I have seen much of it. The women of the upper classes are chic; some of the peasants comely, with dark eyes and wide smiling mouths, but the women grow old early. The men have light graceful figures.

To return to ourselves. Mademoiselle Duval came back from her expedition in a vile temper. I could not make out why at first. Everything had gone off well. They arrived safely at the Pestera at the top of the mountain; they survived its smells. Madame T. had only fallen off her pony three times and was unhurt. They had all, about twenty of them, slept in the tiny

rest-house, and the jokes had been such as Mademoiselle thoroughly appreciated. Clara was very smiling, and had thoroughly enjoyed herself; it was from her I discovered that Monsieur Alcalay had refused to go with them. He told Mademoiselle he was desolated, but he had sprained his ankle, and it was swollen so enormously that he could not get it into his boot. Now, I must tell you he was in the big car that passed us on the Murani road, and which we found, on our return, at the garden gate with Amalia of the blue blouse and wide insertion, talking to the occupant. I fear men are much the same whatever their nationality!

The result in our little party is disagreeable. Mademoiselle has what she calls nerves, which we interpret sulks. She retires to bed in her *salle à manger*-bedroom as early as she can; this is all right on fine nights, when we sup in the kiosk and can walk about in the moonlight. When it is wet, Clara and I are reduced to playing duets in the large *salon*, which we hope those in the flat above enjoy as much as we do.

One evening, as we sat over our supper in the kiosk, we saw various dark figures pass between

us and the lighted opening by the kitchen. The silhouettes had a curious effect, like a kind of shadow buff with all shapes of hats and prominent noses. The heads were all we could see. I told Clara to make inquiries. The next morning she told me with much giggling they were all Amalia's lovers!

Mella gets many kind looks and murmured blessings as she rides in her mail-cart, or trots along beside me chattering English in her gay little voice. Sometimes men stop and take her little flower face in their dirty hands. This angers me, but I suppose they mean well. Once a big fellow in the park lifted her up and kissed her on both cheeks; she was embarrassed, but rather gratified.

Mademoiselle's ill-temper has improved since a letter arrived bearing a Bukarest postmark. It put her into such good spirits that she suggested that I should go to St. Anna with Clara and Irma one afternoon while she took care of Mella. So last Thursday we started down the boulevard, Clara, Irma, their two aunts and myself.

The sun was shining. A big flock of turkeys, twittering loudly, fluttered along the road in a

shimmering cloud of dust. A man in white clothes, an embroidered jacket flung over his shoulder, drove them with a big stick, two enormous dogs at his heels. Some red cows grazed in the little ditch among the blue forget-me-nots; over their heads waved a string of embroidered garments fastened from tree to tree. These were for sale. I resisted the temptation to buy a dressing-gown worked in a heavenly blue and have felt extremely virtuous ever since. A woman sat by the wayside sewing glittering sequins on to a blouse, her seat three wooden jugs placed together. I wish you could have seen the beautiful effect of light and shade made by all this.

We passed close to the Crown Prince's villa, quite a small place with a pretty little garden. I was amused at the sentry who saluted me. I suppose he overheard me speaking English, and concluded I belonged to the household.

The Crown Princess has had a summer-house made for herself in a tree, and often sits up in it with a lady-in-waiting and invites particular friends to tea with her. She calls it "The Nest." Many Rumanians complain that she is too free in her ways; it is most inconsistent of them with

all their talk about democracy. She has a most gracious bow. I met her out alone the other day driving her ponies down a narrow lane, and she gave Mella and me such a pretty bow and smile all to ourselves. I tried to make Mella curtsy, but she was far too shy.

We turned into a forest and wandered on beneath birch and fir; walking was easy on a carpet of dried leaves and fir needles; nothing grows under the thick foliage. In the small open spaces where the sun can penetrate we found some herb Robert, the pink kind with its aromatic smell. Near the noisy streamlet grew burdocks. Do their great leaves remind you of the Ugly Duckling as they do me, I wonder? Do you remember the old duck with the red rag round its leg who was such a cynic?

We saw neither bird nor butterfly, indeed no wild life of any kind. Listen as we would, nothing broke the vast silence. I kept my eyes open in case of bears; I should love to see one shambling along between the trees, though perhaps I should prefer to see him than he me! I am beginning to fear they are mythical. Higher up the hill-side projected great white boulders, wreathed with moss, and tiny climbing plants,

gay with star-like blossoms. I found the rosy stone-pink in the rock crevices, an insignificant flower, which I have since been told is the origin of all our beautiful pinks and carnations.

At St. Anna there is built a little wooden house with a platform, both clinging to the steep hill-side and commanding a magnificent view over the valley and mountains. The effect of looking down upon the thick tree-tops was curious: as they bent before the wind it looked as if the forest were bending in homage before some great spirit.

By this time Irma was anxious for refreshment, the older ladies for rest, so we entered the hut and asked for cake and coffee.

A Viennese lives here alone in the summer months; her husband was valet to the King, but he took to drink, so she divorced him. I conclude she makes her living by selling refreshments to visitors.

This woman made us delicious hot cakes and coffee; then, while we ate and drank, she fetched a zither and sang and played to us, having first let down her back hair. I thought her a strange person.

When we had eaten enough—in Irma's case

a little too much—we climbed up to a pretty waterfall above. Here I saw a solitary bird, a yellow wagtail. We gathered a few ferns, then returned to the hut to pick up the aunts, who were resting there, and started homewards. We went back by a different and less pretty way; we left the forest sooner and got into a winding road. Here we met the Princess, driving a pair of lovely ponies and looking as pretty as usual. The aunts bowed so profoundly in answer to her gracious greeting that they nearly backed into a ditch.

Just beyond the ditch was a grey wall on which a mass of mauve vetchling was thrown like a mantle.

We reached home about eight with fine mountain appetites. We found Mademoiselle in excellent humour. She had dressed up Mella and taken her to the Park, also taking care to attire herself attractively. All the promenading officers noticed her and remarked "What a young mamma!" which was extremely pleasing.

When she had told us her adventures, she retired to bed in the *salle à manger* and screamed out remarks to us through the open window while we supped in the kiosk by the light of a small oil-lamp.

Dr. and Madame Goldschmidt are arriving to-morrow. We have only a few more weeks here; perhaps that accounts for Mademoiselle's good temper.

Good-bye, dear Edmund.

Yours as ever,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER X

Sinaia.

My dear Edmund,

You make me quite ashamed of my cheap little gibes. Of course I think men and women are equally good and also equally bad; there are constant men as well as constant women, selfish women as well as selfish men. Pray don't take what I write for more than it is worth; you can understand that my letters to you are an outlet for my passing feelings, I can, as it were, let myself go. I can write nonsense, make foolish allusions.

Here I always talk like one of Jane Austen's heroines, though I fear more like Mary than Elizabeth Bennett. I have to set an example of deportment and pure English. If I made classic literary quotations, such as "swellin' wisibly" or "come hup, you hugly brute," no one would follow me. Slang is also taboo, as no one would understand it, except perhaps Dr. Goldschmidt, whose knowledge of English is extraordinary.

Now and then habit is too strong for me, and out it comes. Mella invariably repeats it in her pipy tones, often inappropriately, and it sounds so quaint; when she is asked what it means, she blushes and whispers, "Nanna said it!" Then it is Nanna's turn to blush. Indeed Mella is so fond of quoting me that Irma calls her a parrot. At first this made her indignant and inclined to cry. However, she is quite pleased now, as I suggested she should reply that she wasn't a parrot as she had not a black tongue. Now she replies quite happily: "I'se not payot, Irma. I hasn't got a black tongue."

Irma laughs and peace reigns once more.

Dr. and Madame Goldschmidt have arrived. The poker-parties are resumed. Mademoiselle no longer retires to bed at 8.30, leaving Clara and me to amuse ourselves as best we may. I am not supposed to do anything with Clara, except give her English lessons when we can snatch an hour from the Professors. She is very bright, and a pleasant companion; I like to have her with me. She is nice-looking, with a lot of dark hair and pretty grey eyes. Mella is fond of her too, except perhaps when she will borrow the child's pretty hair-ribbons and

forget to return them. Mella is a vain little puss!

We have only a few days longer in this beautiful place. Perhaps it is as well, as the days are getting short, the beeches are bronzing, and this morning Caraiman wore a cap of snow.

We went out to tea yesterday with some relations of the Goldschmidts. They have a little boy and a baby in charge of an English nurse. People here think a good deal of the English, they say they are trustworthy. The little Princes and Princesses have English governesses and tutors; at the races run in Bukarest on winter Sundays all the jockeys are English.

This makes me more sorry at the behaviour of an English governess here in a well-bred Rumanian family. She is a nice-looking woman about my own age. I met her first in Bukarest, and warned her there that she might get into trouble. She picked up a young man in the gardens and "kept company" with him. She seemed to think his attentions would end in matrimony, the sole end of her existence. I told her that he probably never thought of such a thing. She took my remarks in good part, but no doubt thought they were prompted by jealousy.

Here she walks out with any of the officers who ask her. She is obliged to take her little pupil, Didine, with her, but manages to get over any difficulties which might arise from the child's presence. At the end of their walk she says to Didine, "*Tournez-vous.*" Didine obediently turns and admires the view while Miss Richards makes her farewells, in what manner history—or should I say scandal in the form of Nikola's Nanna?—does not say.

The officers seem to think governesses fair game. A pretty girl I know was worried out of her life by their following her home evening after evening, till she was obliged to complain to her employers, who then saw that she had proper protection.

In Bukarest just before I left I went to the rescue of a young German *bonne* who was being persecuted by two young men. Dr. Goldschmidt was very vexed when I told him about it, and said he was afraid there was a good deal of that sort of thing in the city.

We have been several more lovely walks. I will not give you any detailed descriptions of them, as they would only weary you, and the country is the same all about here: mountains, trees and hurrying streams.

I often wish I could paint: one sees one picture after another. For instance, this morning Clara and I went a short walk through the grounds of the King's palace. A band of gipsies was encamped just above the stream; men and women were grouped in their bright-coloured garments mending some copper pans. A wood-fire burned near them, the blue smoke curled up against the dark background of trees; three yellow nasturtiums, blooming at their feet, caught the sunlight which flecked the grass.

At the door of one of the deep-eaved cottages of a pretty village we saw a young bride standing. She was a pretty girl, with large dark eyes and round rosy cheeks. Clara spoke to her. She told us that she was just sixteen, had been married the day before, and was waiting for her husband, a young man of one-and-twenty. When he arrived they were going together to the houses of the wedding guests according to custom, and offer them *dulchasta.*

Mademoiselle has condescended to walk out with the children and me lately. She does not quite like it, as she finds that men look at me as much as at her, which, considering I am nearly a head taller and that a fair woman is a *rara avis*

in these parts, is not surprising. However, she does her best to draw all eyes upon her. The other morning we were coming home from the Park, where we had been listening to the band, when we met a regiment returning from manœuvres. The officers marched beside the men, the bugles tootled gaily, and the whole lot looked both dusty and cheeky! With my accustomed modesty, I pulled the mail-cart well to the side of the road and put the children and myself as much out of sight as possible. This did not suit Mademoiselle Duval, who went on to the bridge—where of course the road is far narrower—and posed herself in an elegant attitude against the parapet. Both officers and men shouted remarks to her as they went by; discipline seemed rather slack. She enjoyed herself thoroughly, staring back at them with her bold green eyes. It rather surprises me that the Goldschmidts keep her with so young a girl as Clara; they are both clever enough to see the kind of woman she is. It is true that she is a good teacher and Clara is a great deal with her parents; and no doubt it is difficult to get a trustworthy French governess so far from Paris.

Two ancient beggars have just been here. They wore lovely old clothes of the softest brown shades and had long white beards and dark eyes. They were exactly my idea of Moses and Aaron. I am afraid they did not quite live up to their appearance, especially when they were refused alms.

Next week your letter will be written in Bukarest. There are plenty of places that I have not described to you yet, such as the Pelesch and the monastery. We shall be coming here again next year, when you shall hear about them. I fear to weary you with more descriptions.

I hear Mella calling me, so must go. She has a powerful voice for so small a person.

Yours as ever,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER XI

Bukarest.

My dear Edmund,

Here we are in Bukarest again. It looks so dried up after the summer. All the grass in the public gardens has turned brown, the roads are full of dust, the little plain near the barracks of the *pompiers* is cracked with drought.

The garden here in Strada Sapienței is very pretty. André has laid it under water every night to keep it green, the catalpa has long green pods hanging from it, and the vine pergola has a ceiling of grapes in long narrow bunches. Oscar has already over-eaten himself with grapes. They are palish brown and without bloom, as they ripen in a sunless spot, the vine-leaves being so thick above them. When you eat them, they have a delicate and peculiar flavour that you are always trying to name and cannot. I call them the " elusive " grape. Mella much enjoys them. After lunch I take a chair into the pergola and cut down a bunch which we divide between us.

The mulberries are ripe on the tree shading the little chapel opposite. Small boys make raids upon it. The pope hides just inside the gate, and rushes out with a big stick, trying to look fierce, and calling out angrily. He never catches the urchins, and they are back again in the tree almost before his back is turned. I fear the poor old fellow doesn't enjoy much of his fruit.

October is a pleasant month here, warmer and stiller than with us in England. If you ever visit Bukarest, come either in April, May, or October; the summer months are far too hot.

The Professor invasion is in full force. Monsieur Dulberger finds the weather still unpleasantly warm; at least, I think he does, judging from his looks. Poor man! what does he do in August and September?

Mella and I go and sit with Regina on her balcony when the nursery is engaged. It faces north, so is cooler than ours; it is narrower and has iron railings in the place of our imposing balusters.

Irma has begun dancing lessons. Mella and I take her; it is an amusing performance.

The dancing-master is called Herr Schmidt—why does it sound so much more important than Mr. Smith?—he is, of course, a German, tall, rather stout, with a grey beard. He has a great deal of deportment, and I felt shy of offering him the two-franc piece at the end of Irma's lesson. He took it with the air of one conferring a favour.

He lives in a flat about a quarter of an hour's walk from here; we have to climb a number of dark stairs when we reach the block of buildings.

Sometimes when we arrive Herr Schmidt is still engaged. One day an officer was waltzing alone very seriously; the dancing-master leant against the door-post and counted loudly.

There are ten girls in our class; if we arrive too punctually, we fill up the little hall and Frau Schmidt invites some of us into her sitting-room. It is not a large room, and it is dark and generally overheated. The last time we went Frau Schmidt was there herself; her soldier son was smoking in front of the fire, his uniformed legs taking up half the carpet; his wife was sitting on the edge of the bed nursing her baby; and a girl was leaning over the stove, stirring something savoury in a saucepan.

Mella and I sat together on a small sofa and Frau Schmidt talked to me. It is a great misfortune to look as intelligent as I do, people always think I understand them when I have really not the least idea what they are saying! She chattered on. A canary, whose cage darkened the window, was not to be outdone; it sang lustily. A small mongrel dog appeared from under the sofa and tried to make friends with us. Anything beyond a guinea-pig or a white rabbit terrifies Mella, so when the mongrel, wishing to be friendly, put a paw on her lap, she screamed piercingly. I took her in my arms and tried to console her and apologize at the same time. Frau Schmidt called the dog, slapping her knee loudly to encourage him; the canary sang with more fervour. You never heard such a noise in your life; I could not keep from laughing. Fortunately, Herr Schmidt arrived to say he was ready, and we went into the dancing-room.

Mella recovered as soon as she lost sight of the dog; I wiped her eyes, and she sat on my knee and watched the dancers. How the youthful pianist managed to play I can't imagine, as his head was always turned in my direction! I leave

Mella at home now if I go; but that is seldom, as Mademoiselle has a fancy to take Irma, and I stay at home with Mella.

I have just been to see an English friend of mine in the Strada Polonei; she is a North Country woman from Newcastle-on-Tyne, I think; her husband is agent for one of the big petroleum companies. Like every one else here, she is extremely kind to me; she asks me to tea with and without the children and lends me books. We go to see her sometimes in the morning; Mella likes going, as Mrs. Walker always gives her milk and macaroons; though too shy to speak, she is not too shy to eat.

This morning I went to borrow a book; French novels pall quickly. I found Mrs. Walker in much tribulation.

She lives in a one-storied house—there are many here—raised a few feet from the ground. There is a wide hall in the centre, the sitting-rooms and bedrooms open from it on either side. The kitchen and servants' quarters are at the back.

Last night about an hour after she and her husband had gone to bed, she heard some one knocking at the window. Her husband was

asleep, so with wifely consideration she did not disturb him, but slipped out of bed, and, putting on a dressing-gown, opened the casement window.

A policeman stood outside. She asked what he wanted.

He told her that a man had just entered her house.

She replied indignantly it was impossible. Her servants were in bed, Mr. Walker had been carefully round the house before he turned in. At least, that is what she tried to tell him, but her Rumanian is scanty.

The policeman insisted. He said she must let him in to search the house.

She woke poor Mr. Walker, who was cross and sleepy, not unnaturally, and he opened the front door. Mrs. Walker would not be left behind, so a quaint procession started, headed by Mr. Walker, who carried a big stick; the policeman was in the centre; Mrs. Walker brought up the rear, and looked over the policeman's head.

They searched every room; cupboards, presses, even ottomans were opened; curtains were shaken; dark corners explored. No one was found. "You see," said Mr. Walker, of course in Rumanian. The policeman shook his

head solemnly. "The servants," he said. "They have been in bed an hour or more," objected their master. "And are quite trustworthy," added their mistress.

Nevertheless the man of the law insisted. They went to the maids' apartments. There was a slight pause outside the door as Mr. Walker lighted a bit of candle his wife had fetched. There was no electric light in that part of the house. They entered. Mr. Walker held the light aloft. The maids were in bed, apparently fast asleep. The policeman looked keenly round, then pounced! From under the cook's bed he drew forth an enormous red-headed driver!

Mrs. Walker was quite upset when she told me this sad history. She takes great interest in her servants, and tries to keep them from harm; she believed in these two, who had been with her for some time. I dared not smile, though the situation was a trifle humorous.

You ask me about wages. I can only tell you what Madame Goldschmidt gives her servants. She pays them well, I am told, and though she gets plenty of work out of them they are well housed and well fed. The cook gets £18 a year, the parlour-maid only £6, the under-housemaid

only £4. As I have told you, they don't wear uniform and in the morning slope about in an untidy get-up, though they smarten themselves in the afternoon. Mrs. Walker makes her maids wear the national dress and no shoes and stockings.

Men servants are better paid. We had a German butler for a time; he always treated me with immense politeness and consideration, addressed me when we happened to meet with flowing speeches, which I could not follow. He was imperturbability itself; he was not the least put out when one party night he brought me up tea and *gâteau* and found me in bed.

Washing is done at home. The washerwoman comes once a month or six weeks, and does it in the house, aided by the servants. Here they have everything convenient for laundry-work, and do it well. The clothes are dried in the huge attics.

Mademoiselle Duval is in high feather. Once more we spend our evenings together in the study, it is too cold for the balcony. She still renounces dinner. She talks much about her "boy" in Vienna, and as often as she can to

Monsieur Alcalay. She is clever at making chances!

Amalia has been promoted to under-housemaid. I see her going out in the blue blouse with the transparent insertion.

Mella is enamoured of needlework and is busy with a remarkable piece of patchwork. She is a dear little person; I wonder very much what she will grow into. Like many people, she is interested in what frightens her; she loves to hear stories about your dogs and horses. She sends them her love; I send mine to their master, and remain

Your affectionate cousin,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER XII

Bukarest.

My dear Edmund,

A cat may look at a king. A young pianist may look at a nurse, especially if she is in uniform and has fair hair, blue eyes and rosy cheeks. These are not common amongst the Latin races, my dear sir, and coupled with a tall figure, must naturally attract a little attention in this country of sallow skins and black eyes.

Shall I shroud myself *à la turque*? Will it greatly disturb your equanimity when I tell you a man put his head under my hat-brim yesterday and ejaculated "*Frumos!*" which, being interpreted, means "Pretty"?

I acknowledge I wanted to box his ears, but as it was in the Calea Victoriei at its most crowded hour, I thought it more dignified to pretend I had not heard and pass on.

You are longing for some history, I know; the thought fills me with despair, as anything

more puzzling than the history of the Rumanian race I can't imagine—of course I mean puzzling to the average female intellect!

As I mentioned before, the two provinces were only united a comparatively short time ago—I think in 1861—and so they have separate histories.

The Rumanians claim descent from the legions of Trajan, who overran Dacia about 106 and killed Decebalus, the Dacian leader. They certainly resemble the faces on early Roman coins, the men especially, and they speak a Latin dialect. A good Latin scholar told me he could read any Rumanian book. I can vouch for it too in my own small way, as I can generally make out advertisements from the little Latin I know. Mixed with the Latin are from two to three hundred Slav words, and some Greek. The chief dialect is spoken by about nine millions of people, those of the united provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia, and the Rumanian Bessarabia and Transylvania, in the Banat—wherever that is!—and in parts of Hungary and Bukovina. There are besides two subordinate dialects. The chief is the only one which has a literature.

I am told their poetry is beautiful, notably

that of Alexandri, their chief poet. Irma has been learning some of his lines lately, and spouting them to Dulberger over their tea.

Some people admire the language, but I find it rather harsh.

These Danubian Provinces, as they used to be called, were overrun in turn by the savage hordes that used to devastate Europe: Huns, Avars, Magyars, etc. etc. They have been ruled by Turks, Russians and Greeks; the latter through the Fanariots, or commercial Princes, whose one idea was to squeeze all they could out of the wretched countries.

The weather is getting cooler, so we take our walks further afield and do not spend so much time in the garden. You want to know a little what this town is like and whence its name. I have been told a legend about the latter, which I will relate to you; and as the consequence will be a long letter, you had better keep it for a non-cubbing day, as you will most assuredly fall asleep over it.

In the springtime, some hundreds of years ago, a shepherd wandered beside the Dambovitza, then a slow river which meandered southward through marshy plains to join the Danube in

its sullen passage to the Black Sea. One can imagine the brown-eyed peasant, dressed perhaps even in those days in a brown homespun cloak embroidered in red, full blue trousers pleated into a band and embroidered round the pockets in front. Huge shineless boots are drawn up to his knees. His under-jacket of sheep's leather is worked in crude shades of scarlet and magenta; his large ears hidden by his pointed black sheepskin cap; his mouth slightly open. His dog walked to heel, his sheep followed as closely as they dared, nibbling the grass at his feet, grass starred with the yellow gogea and shaded with branches of weeping willow.

Bucar stopped and looked about him and across the wide marshes. Just behind him, as he faced the river, rose a low rocky hill; he climbed this, his big dog panting behind him. When he reached the top, he was so pleased with the view before him that he built a little church with a mushroom-like belfry on the spot.

This is the legend as it was told me; whether Bucar built the church by himself, with help only from his dog, I do not know. But if he did, I *do* know that the founder of Bukarest was a

WEST FRONT OF CATHEDRAL, BUKAREST

much more energetic person than any of his descendants.

If he could look once more from that ancient porch—for the church still stands where he built it—he would gaze astonished at the sight before him: at the big straggling city of 300,000 people stretching across the plain round him, its gilded domes glittering in the sunshine; at the chocolate roofs of the dwelling-houses embowered in trees; at the electric trams whizzing by with a clang of bells; at a troop of cavalry with glancing helmets passing at the trot.

From the arsenal on yonder hill comes the booming of cannon, and from the streets rises the hum of a busy people. The river, now confined between steep banks and crossed with handsome bridges, winds like a narrow ribbon through the maze of streets. Once in the year, and once only, does anything poetical touch this essentially commonplace stream. At the Epiphany the Metropolitan blesses the water, and this is made the occasion of great ceremony. The King attends; troops, accompanied by their regimental bands, line the banks. These said bands, by the way, do little credit to the national love of music.

A great concourse of people assembles to see the rescue by soldiers of a flower-cross which has been flung into the ice-cold water. They bear it dripping to the King, who redeems it with pieces of gold. Is this not also a Russian custom? I have read of something of the same kind taking place in the Neva.

On the right bank of the Dambovitza rises the stately Palais de Justice; groups of peasants always darken the wide shallow steps.

Dr. Goldschmidt tells me the Rumanian peasant is a lover of litigation; the law, a favourite profession for the educated classes. If the peasant is as poor as I am told he is, I don't know how he pays for the luxury.

A little further down the river, the ground rises gradually till it reaches the pillared gateway of the avenue leading to the Cathedral, of which more anon.

Below its three buff towers, which overlook the town, lie the squat white sheds of the fruit and vegetable market. The wide open verandas are piled with peppers in masses of crimson, green and yellow, varied with heaps of orange tomatoes and purple *boulangers*. Strings of small pale brown onions decorate the eavse.

The vendors sit beside their goods, shouting remarks to each other, or haggle with their customers. The meat market is across the river; I have never visited it.

Of course we go shopping sometimes, but except for the two great confectioners, Riegler and Capsa, the shops are not equal to those of our big provincial towns. Prices are usually high; there is a heavy tariff on all imported goods to encourage native manufactures. The Rumanian linen button is a curious object, made, I imagine, of cotton or linen thread somehow twisted on wire.

English needles, boots and woollen goods are much appreciated. There is a shop called "High Life" in the Calea Victoriei; I don't know what it means. I think it sells men's garments.

In some of the smaller streets, the old bazaar custom of putting together all the shops selling the same object is still carried on. For instance, in one, there is a long row of hat shops, in another a succession of boot and shoe ditto. I like the plan, as you can so easily compare goods and prices.

In the larger shops both French and German

are spoken. I have only once heard English; and then all the man could say was "Good morning," which he never failed to do whenever I passed his shop.

In some parts of the town men stand outside their shops and tout for customers. My friend evidently thought his English would draw me. However, poor man, he was disappointed, as I think he sold saddlery and straps, for which I had no use.

Besides the Cathedral there are several handsome Orthodox Churches, a Roman Catholic Cathedral, and a Lutheran Church. I have tried most of them. The Lutheran Church is built of cream-coloured wood and is just like pale gingerbread; it reminds me of the bricks we used to build with when we were nursery folk. I went to church there with Regina one Sunday; the service recalled that in a Scotch kirk. The pulpit is the most imposing thing in the church, the sermon of portentous length. I was proud when I found I could follow the German sufficiently to recognize that the subject of the discourse was the Prodigal Son. I confess I guessed it because of the frequent mention of *Schwein!*

There was no organ; indeed, I am told there is no such thing in Bukarest. Dr. Goldschmidt is trying to get one for the Synagogue, but the Rabbi does not take to the idea. The congregation sang the hymns lustily to well-known tunes. I much enjoyed singing them, rolling out the German gutturals in fine style and much surprising Regina. Now I come to think of it, I hope it was my energy and not my German accent!

The building was severely plain inside, only a huge crucifix hanging from the roof. This was not Scotch!

Another day I went to S. Josef, the Roman Catholic Cathedral. There I was scandalized at the behaviour of the congregation. No one knelt but this little heretic; a few bent the knee when a bell tinkled. Some officers wandered up and down the aisles, looking at the women and making audible remarks, something after the manner of our old friend Pepys at St. Paul's. The priest intoned badly, and there was no singing. What would the rector say to that?

You ask me if there is a West End to this quaint city. Why, certainly, as our Yankee cousins say, or, do they? The smart quarter of the town is near the Chaussée or Park. Here

are built up-to-date houses in the usual continental style, white stucco and high windows, so uninteresting a style of domestic architecture, in my humble and British opinion. London? Oh, of course London is a place by itself, and not to be judged by ordinary standards on account of its immensity.

There are a few houses showing a revival of ancient taste by their deep eaves, wide outside staircases and decorative tiles. Don't you think the outside staircase a real invitation to burglars? There is an awful atrocity of a house perpetrated by some Prince or other. It looks made of glass and tiles, and is much admired by Bukarescians! Do you think that the correct manner of naming the inhabitants of the home of Bucar?

The Chaussée itself is a broad drive, with a narrow belt of land on either side planted with trees and laid out with paths and flower-beds. The drive widens into a big circle at the far end, and beyond that is the race-course. Behind the more cultivated parts are fields where the children and I pick wild flowers.

Irma had a terrible fright one day. She was stooping to pick a flower, when a fierce dog rushed at her, growling fiercely; he seized her

skirt in his teeth and tore it from the gathers. She behaved well and only screamed once, though naturally much frightened. If it had been Mella, she would never have got over it.

On the wide road of the Chaussée the "Upper sukkles" drive solemnly up and down, either in carriages or motors. The women are well dressed. Officers in uniform ride, or drive smart dog-carts *à l'anglais*, or sometimes an *egoïste*, a carriage for one, drawn by three horses; it looks all wheels, and goes at a great pace. The horses are fine beasts, but often rather clumsy-looking and hairy about the heels. They are not very fast.

The coachmen wear the heavy pelisses I have already told you about, and which makes them look bulky and important; the Russians wear a kind of lancer cap with it, which is effective. I saw a groom in a tweed suit and a bowler hat, seated with crossed arms behind a dog-cart the other day; his suit was of the pepper-and-salt type, and quite English.

There are one or two restaurants in the Park, also a nondescript building where Madame Goldschmidt and I once visited a poor poultry show. The birds seemed to feel how inadequate

they were and tried to hide themselves in the corners of their dirty pens. Attractive as all this sounds, we do not visit the Chaussée often, it is rather too long a walk.

We are all well, "I hope this finds you as it leaves me," as old Maria used to say when she wrote her term letter to you. Mella is learning to write; she makes pothooks and hangers, and covers herself and everything else she can with ink. I spread newspapers all over the table and under her chair during the lesson. Madame Goldschmidt is very particular about her table and parquet.

Dr. Goldschmidt is reading the Bible in Hebrew; he finds it very interesting. Madame Goldschmidt is deep in "David Copperfield." Don't you think the Peggotty dialect must puzzle her? And what can she think of Micawber? She never asks me any questions about the book. She generally takes it into the *salon* after lunch, along with a plate of walnuts.

I have been teaching the young people "Go bang." Here comes Irma begging for a game, so I must finish.

Many thanks for the papers you send. I am glad you had such a good run on Wednesday.

I wish, though, you would not ride Ryman; he's not up to your weight, which, by the way, I trust is not increasing in the extra quiet gained by my absence!

Yours as ever and not even a pound heavier, thank goodness!

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER XIII

Bukarest.

My dear Edmund,

Your letter was welcome; many thanks for it, though it entrenched a little on forbidden subjects. My mind is at present unchanged; my present life is fairly engrossing, so a little more patience, please.

Your description of the late corn harvest made me feel a bit homesick, all the same. I could see the long field with the evening shadows across it, as we saw it last year with dear Aunt Augusta. Do you remember how she loved the yellow glow of the corn in the evening sun? You must not expect me to sympathize with your regret at the scarcity of partridges, when all you want is to shoot the dear little plump birds.

The rector is kind to remember me so often; if I can find time, I will write and tell him the little I know about the Orthodox Church. The old pope who lives opposite looks amiable though

dirty. He and I have a bowing acquaintance, and he blesses Mella whenever he meets her.

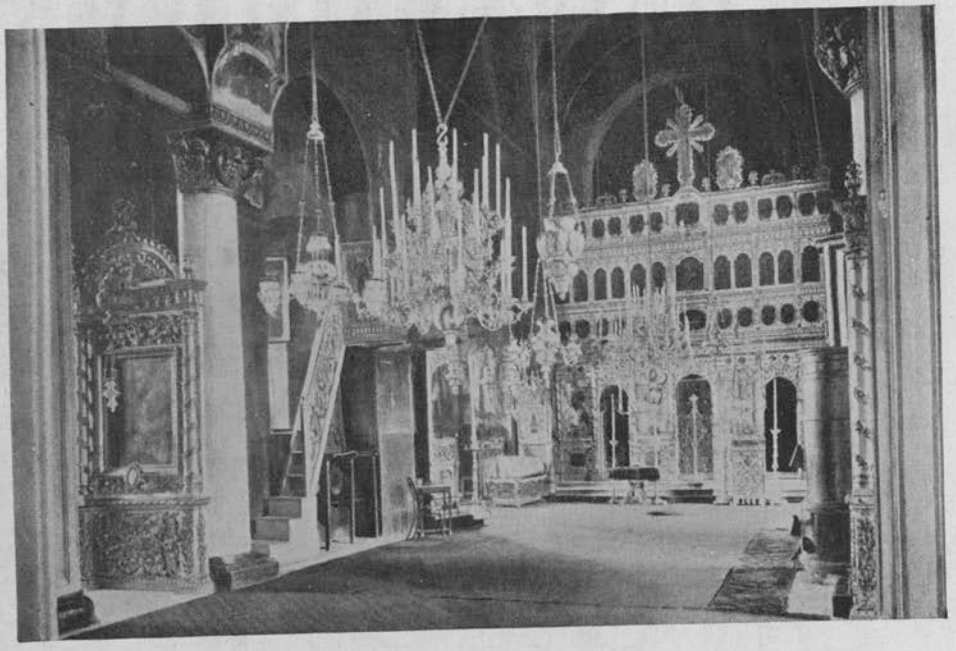
The circus opposite is being repainted; it will re-open soon for its winter season.

This morning early we heard such a mewing outside the nursery window that I got up and looked out. There I saw a cat and five or six wee kittens in the corner under the mulberry-tree. Every one who passed stopped to look at them. I was in terror of a dog coming to destroy the lot. At last a woman came, who had a large apron on. She knelt down, caught a kitten and put it in her apron; as she proceeded to catch another, the old cat lifted out the first, and this went on for some minutes, until she called to a man going by to come to the rescue. He held the struggling matron while the woman collected the kittens, and finally bundled the old cat on the top, and went off with her extremely conversational family. I wondered how the cat got them there in the first place, as the kitties were certainly a week or two old and there were so many of them.

This afternoon the children and I went round the Cathedral; we had a most interesting time. It stands on a low hill barely twenty minutes'

walk from us; we have often walked round the building, but have never entered it before. It is placed well; the chief entrance is reached by a steep road planted with two rows of acacia-trees. At the foot of the hill stand four pillared gate-posts; on the top of each perches an eagle with outspread wings, holding a cross in its beak. We went up this avenue with somewhat breathless rapidity on account of Mella, who dreads the sound of the great bell. Again I can't say why, as she has never heard it except sometimes in the morning when the wind blows the sound in our direction. The bell is inadequately hung on a wooden erection, rather like a highwayman's gibbet. Mella gives it a scared sideways glance as she scuttles by. Perhaps the poor little soul thinks it goes off of itself without any warning; to me its tone is deep and impressive.

Panting slightly, we arrived at the old yellow gateway, with the quaint belfry reared above it. I climbed the narrow winding stair and saw nothing more interesting than a fine view through the narrow unglazed window. The city with its golden domes lay beneath me; in the distance I saw a puff of white smoke. My heart leaped: it was a train going west, perhaps bearing some



INTERIOR OF CATHEDRAL, BUKAREST

one to that dear land which we never love as well as when we are out of it.

Inside the gateway is a roughly paved court-yard, planted with lime-trees. To the left stands the insignificant building used as a Parliament House, to the right a pretty plantation and a narrow garden lead to the Metropolitan's house. One day when we were here in the late spring, we saw a big bed of sweet-william in full bloom with a cloud of white butterflies hovering over it; the sun was shining, and the sky a radiant blue. It was so pretty.

In the middle of the yard stands the Cathedral itself, a buff-coloured building with three towers and very few windows. The great porch is decorated with rows of rudely coloured paintings arranged one above the other in narrow flat alcoves. I conclude each crude figure represents a departed saint, as each man or woman is decorated with a golden halo. A young pope who showed us round thought them beautiful; but then, poor dear man, he has never been to Burlington House in May!

This pope was a slight young man, with eyes set close together and a short beard parted in the middle. He was much interested in me, as

he had never seen an Englishwoman before; he was most anxious to discover my beliefs. As, however, he had no English and little French, and most of our conversation was interpreted by Irma from English to Rumanian and vice versa, I declined a discussion and contented myself with telling him I was a member of the Anglican Church—of which, judging from his astonished expression, he had never heard—then changed the current of his thoughts by admiring his beautiful church.

The building is about three hundred years old. Though not large, it has an air of spaciousness, as the interior is empty except for the much decorated pulpit and some oak seats round the walls.

There is, of course, no organ.

The pulpit is higher than any I have ever seen; the staircase up to it looks long and narrow. I suppose, as there are no sittings, the congregation stand to be preached at; it is to be hoped the preachers remember that the merciful are blessed, and give short sermons. Icons in handsome frames hang from the walls; each picture has a small replica let into the frame at the foot for the faithful to kiss. I suppose the merit

gained is the same as if they kissed the holy pictures themselves; it is certainly economical. Two well-dressed women were passing busily from one to the other, the noise of their osculations sounding oddly in the quiet place. They had time between their devotions to glance curiously at us.

Irma was much amused at them. She has no bump of reverence, and cannot conceive any one believing in anything sufficiently to take so much trouble! There was a funny side to it, especially as both ladies were inclined to *embonpoint.*

Mella was alarmed at the whole place; she held my hand tight and threw scared glances around.

The screen is magnificent; it is of silver gilt with two rows of pictures let into it. Behind it, under a canopy, is an Altar with the Host upon it. The pope had no objection to my passing through the door of the screen to look at it, heretic though I am!

To the left, as you face the screen, is a large silver coffin that contains the bones of the illustrious Dimitri, patron saint of Bukarest. Embossed pictures on the coffin illustrate the miracles performed by the holy man. It seems that Saint

Dimitri has command over the weather; when rain is wanted his coffin is carried in great state round the city. If perchance, like Baal of old, he sleepeth or is engaged elsewhere and no rain follows, several relics of other saints are dragged round with him; the pope told us their combined efforts never fail.

By the way, King Carol is a Roman Catholic; so is his heir and nephew, the Crown Prince Ferdinand, therefore they only attend the services and sit in the crimson arm-chairs on ceremonial occasions. The Crown Princess is an Anglican; we often see her at our services. I sit quite near her, and admire her during the dear old chaplain's dull sermons; we gather round the door outside and watch her drive off in her quiet brougham after a few pleasant words to those she knows in the congregation.

The young pope wanted to take me all round the church to examine each icon separately; but I found Mella was on the point of tears, so was obliged to leave at once. She is certainly a very nervous little person, perhaps the silence frightened her. Whatever it was, I have never managed to get her inside a church again. Do you think she was only bored?

We went out of the courtyard by another gateway, which goes under that part of the buildings where the Cathedral clergy live, then down a narrow lane into the Boulevard Maria, which took us back to the quay. On the way home we met a funeral, a gorgeous one, so we stood by to gaze in true nursemaid fashion.

Two men rode in front, dressed in black, with cock's feathers streaming from their hats; they carried lamps draped in crape. The hearse was also draped in black and decorated with enormous artificial wreaths. In the first two carriages sat six or seven popes dressed in gorgeous raiment; the rest were filled with mourners. The coffin had a top hat on it to show it contained the body of a man; when a woman is buried a piece of a dress is left hanging out.

Sometimes a brass band is engaged, and walks behind, playing lustily. If a girl dies, she has girl mutes to follow the hearse; they are dressed in white. The other day I saw one strolling along with very dirty boots protruding from a dirtier petticoat and only partly hidden by her white garments. It seems the undertakers take any girls who will go for the money.

Two boys walk ahead to carry the bread and salt on large flat plates.

A big funeral passing makes a great deal of noise, as except the Calea Victoriei the streets are paved with cobbles.

Dr. Goldschmidt tells me he can remember when he was a boy at school they used to put boards along the road in order to get there at all, the mud was so thick. I consider the roadway very bad now; there are great holes, where cobbles should be, that are full of liquid mud in winter, and are small dust pits in summer.

I hear Professor Dulberger shuffling along the passages, and there is the tea-bell! I must go. Mella is pulling my sleeve, she is hungry.

Madame Goldschmidt objects to running in the passages, and prefers us to use the back staircase, so we pace solemnly along, and arrive by surprise ways in the dining-room. Mademoiselle is already at tea. I hear her talking, she has a penetrating voice. Irma is begging me to be sure to send her up a cake; she has discovered somehow that old Cookie has made her favourites, and she is obliged to have tea in the nursery during the intervals of her Rumanian lesson.

The said cakes are excellent; they are a kind of bread with layers of a delicious mixture made with nuts.

Monsieur Dulberger is telling me something in German, about his little boys. It seems to amuse Irma, so I laugh politely as I finish this.

Good-bye for the present.

Yours as ever,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER XIV

Bukarest.

MY DEAR EDMUND,

Your dinner-party strikes me as dull and ponderous compared to the one we had the same night. I can imagine the whole of your stately ceremony, from Marston's pompous announcement of dinner to your courteous farewells on the doorstep at 10.30. Why will dear Mrs. Holland always get into the rectory growler last and flop on the top of the others? I asked her once and she said she could see out of the window better, she did so *love* to see the stars. Bertie wickedly said he always saw stars when she got in!

We had a star of a different sort dining with us, a singer with a beautiful and cultivated voice but an unfortunately plain appearance. I have been told that Carmen Sylva, who is intensely musical, was so taken up with her voice that she had her trained as a public singer. She has appeared in Grand Opera, but is out of

an engagement now, "resting," isn't it called? She seems very good-natured, and often comes into the nursery. She loves doing nothing; and sits with her arms spread out on the nursery table watching me sew. The children groan audibly when she comes in as they know it means an end to story-telling and little games. I always play with them between tea and bed-time.

She is amazed at my industry, which is really not great, and inquires regularly if I don't ever sit idle? She has a fine appetite, which she indulges when she can, and she looks like the popular idea of a German *Frau*. She lives in Bukarest. Clara and I visited her in her flat one day; we had great difficulty in finding her apartment; the building was like a great rabbit-warren; people kept popping out of unexpected doors as we passed in our wanderings, and, oh dear! the stairs *were* dirty.

Another occasional visitor is one of the consuls. He is never so happy as when asked to play something; he sits down to the piano and improvises for ages, while the rest of the company listens and prays inwardly for slumber. When he stops he asks for beer, which he drinks off at once and,

unless otherwise persuaded, will continue his improvisations with renewed energy.

Another of our dinner-party guests is a young tenor with long hair and dirty nails. Dr. Goldschmidt is kindly helping him in his career. His name I cannot spell; his voice is divine.

The two aunts—those of the St. Anna party—made up the table, with the Goldschmidts and myself.

Of course you want to know what we had for dinner. We had several *hors d'œuvre*, then soup, followed by a delicious compound of fish, cream and cheese, served in scallop shells, which was greatly appreciated. It is the correct thing here to make remarks on the food. "Delicious," "exquisite," the guests murmur in their various languages, in the intervals of audible swallowing. We next had a dish entirely of vegetables, cooked with butter, and served in its own copper pan; this is a popular dish in our household, except with "La Nurse," who finds it oily.

The *rôti* was beef rolled into a long fat sausage and served on a skewer; the sweet, an open tart made of short pastry and sliced apples cooked in red wine.

The waiting was poor according to our stan-

dards: there were lengthy pauses between the courses, and the plates were invariably cold. No one seemed to mind, and the many-tongued conversation flowed on.

The cooking itself was excellent.

After dinner there was some superior music and singing. Dr. Goldschmidt has a fine bass voice. Later in the evening the tenor gave us a most curious performance. He hypnotized a friend and made him do exactly what he told him. Instead of mesmerizing him quietly in the usual fashion, he made weird gestures, accompanying them with most extraordinary noises, enough to frighten his subject instead of soothing him. I am told that the tenor himself is under the influence of another man; so much so indeed that Dr. Goldschmidt thought it harmful and tried his best to break the connection.

Dr. Goldschmidt wrote stating his objections and received in answer a letter about the young man's soul, which he read aloud to us at lunch.

I can't imagine one Englishman writing to another about his friend's soul unless he happened to be a parson. Did *you* ever do it?

It has begun to snow at last; we have been

kept in two days while the snow still falls steadily in flakes as big as a baby's hand. Countryfolk are pleased: unless there is a heavy downfall of snow in the winter the crops do not get sufficient moisture, and dry up when the summer heat comes.

This great house is comfortable enough; it is warmed by hot-water pipes which are fed by a huge furnace-heated boiler in the basement.

The nursery looks dreary without an open fire, one never seems to know where to sit; the windows are still draped with Nottingham lace curtains, one quite longs for a bit of crimson.

Some of the rooms never have the windows open during the cold weather, the most that is done is to open the inner panes, as all the windows are double. I open one of the nursery windows twice a day for a quarter of an hour to renew the air. I must confess it takes a little time to warm up afterwards. We don't get much exercise; I play games with the children in the evening, but the pride which fills the breast of the average Englishman—or woman—after a day's exercise seems unknown here. They get on very well without it; though perhaps more

"nervy" than we are, they don't have nearly so many colds and coughs.

For once I write in the morning, it is about eleven o'clock. Mella has just finished eating the morning egg which I ask for in my choicest German, and is doing her copy with a vast expenditure of ink; she resolutely refuses to use pencils.

Mademoiselle Duval's voice comes loud and shrill from the study, poor Irma is having a bad time over her French. From the *salon* comes the sound of a piano, Clara is having a music lesson.

In the quiet intervals, which occur occasionally, I hear Oscar's violin squealing. It is a Saint's Day, so he has a holiday from school. André, the handy man, is turning out the hall; Madame Goldschmidt, in her morning negligée, is screaming instructions to him from the gallery. So you see we are all busy. Dr. Goldschmidt's room is immediately under our quarters; I imagine he is either dictating something or having an interview with a client, his deep voice goes booming on. Loie Fuller came to consult him the other day. I saw her sitting in the hall, an uninteresting-looking person in mufti. One of the funniest things to see is the row of snow boots

waiting in the lobby; there they are from the largest sizes and clumsiest makes down to quite dainty little affairs worn by the women over their smart shoes.

Every one wears them in muddy or wet weather and sheds them on entering the house; a most sensible plan and one we might adopt with advantage. I have seen Aunt Augusta shudder visibly as the nervous curate's dirty boots shuffled uneasily on her drawing-room carpet.

From where I write—on the ledge above the hot-water pipes—I can see out into the snowy road. A peasant has just gone down on his knees in the slush before the small icon hanging on the mulberry-tree opposite, he has bared his head to the storm and is crossing himself rapidly. I suppose even ignorant superstitious worship has its value when founded on sincerity, and his simple faith will be rewarded. There, he has put his sheepskin cap on again and is walking off. God speed thee, simple friend!

Did I ever tell you of the pictures hanging on the chapel wall opposite? I think one is intended to represent our Saviour preaching from the boat in the Lake of Galilee. The sky

in the picture is remarkably blue, the sea equally so. Our Lord is standing in an extremely small boat with a brilliantly dressed crowd of tall apostles behind him; *one* of the figures alone would have swamped the boat. I have seen many people stop admiringly before this picture; it is certainly striking. Shall I buy it for your gallery? It is a fine bit of colour.

Time for Irma's English lessons, so farewell. You need not distress yourself about the said lessons, teaching is one of the things I like doing, I imagine I do it well. Leave me my delusion if you can.

Always yours,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER XV

Bukarest.

My dear Edmund,

Do you realize that we are fourteen days behind you here? We stick to the Old Style Calendar. I am going to have two Christmas Days: one all to myself when I shall get letters, go to my own church and feel homesick; the other a fortnight later—what we call Twelfth Night—when the household will keep theirs.

I dare say you have observed we keep all the feasts and ignore the fasts, except that of the Atonement, the greatest among Jewish observances.

Regina is determined I shall have something English, and is making some English cake, and murmurs something about punch, most Pickwickian and delectable of beverages. Madame Goldschmidt has discovered my weakness for Chartreuse, she often gives me a little after lunch. Irma always has the glass to lick.

Madame notices that I do not like some of the Rumanian dishes, and she never fails to order something different for me. I think few English ladies would take this trouble for a nurse or governess who had only been a short time in their employ.

Manners are not these people's strong point. The other day a boy who was lunching here so enjoyed a certain dish—a kind of forcemeat cooked in vine-leaves—that he went on eating till he could swallow no more. He sat up opposite me with a large piece hanging out of his mouth. It was not a pretty sight.

We are having about 30 degrees of frost. The snow is frozen hard, there is no wind and brilliant sunshine.

We go into the gardens to watch the people skating on the big pond. They have a huge fire. Music is supplied by a band, which plays alternately with a hurdy-gurdy placed in the middle of the large pond. Some of the people skate beautifully with a pretty swinging motion; the children and I love watching them. We stand on the same bridge from which we feed the frogs. What becomes of those interesting amphibians? Do they lie under the bottom of

the pond under the ice and come out with the spring sunshine? Surely not.

Mella is delighted with the band and the skaters, I regret to say especially when they come to grief. Sometimes as many as twenty will take hands; if the corner one, who acts as pivot, falls in the act of turning, down they all go like a pack of cards. A particularly attractive-looking young officer in the usual pretty brown uniform likes to show off figures-of-eight and bunches-of-grapes. He caught his foot in some inequality in the ice yesterday and came a regular cropper. Fortunately, only his vanity or his feelings were hurt; Mella laughed aloud at the sight of his well-shod feet in the air; he heard the merry sound and gave her a withering glance. I can't think how he could, she looks so sweet in her little fur-bordered hood.

We had a small children's party the other day. You remember you always declared I had an unnatural liking for them?

The children here are not taught to think of anyone but themselves, the consequence was that at my party each child wanted to do something different from what the others wished, and squabbling was incessant.

Two of the little ones who came with their English nurse are called Flossie and Violet and are just like little English children; Violet is two and such a pet. Two of the other guests were distant cousins of the Goldschmidts, a mixture of Russian and German, very stout and stolid with their hair in two pigtails. The fifth and last child was also a cousin, a pretty, clever little thing. She is only eight years old, but writes French poetry and can do anything in the way of doll's millinery. She has a huge imagination and is an amazing liar.

No one seems to think truth a necessary virtue; my efforts to teach Mella to speak it are regarded with a kind of respectful amusement. This particular child is not content with saying what is convenient at the moment, but composes long histories about her relatives. I was considerably astonished at some of them until her peculiarities were explained to me.

There has been a general hair-cutting in the establishment lately. The hair-dresser comes to the house, is ensconced in the bathroom, where the family visit him in turns. The floor was thick with hair by the time he had finished, most of them have thick crops. Mella's is the

curliest I have ever seen; when I have to wash it her shrieks are appalling. The first time the event took place the whole household rushed in to see what was happening.

Madame has a good many poker-parties just now. It is surprising she does not get tired of playing, particularly as I understand the stakes are strictly limited. I lend Madame an occasional franc to bring her luck. The other morning I saw her run across the hall laughing like a girl, she had just been asked via telephone to an unexpected party.

I suppose you went sleighing when you were in Germany? I find it a delightful pastime and wish I could have more of it than I do. Madame Goldschmidt took me out with her the other day.

The snow is carefully raked off the pavements on to the road. The public sleighs are drawn by two horses, the drivers wear the usual pelisse and sheepskin cap drawn over the ears. There are bells fastened above the splashboard in front. The coachmen drive at the usual furious pace, a rein in each hand, and howl louder than ever at the corners, to be heard above the clashing bells. It is quite an exciting experience; the

icy wind against one's face is so invigorating, though it is well to keep the ears covered.

As I went along, feeling distinctly pleased with myself and the world in general, I noticed that every one I passed looked at me and smiled, I flattered myself at my amiable expression. However, when I got home and, for once, glanced at myself in the glass I laughed outright. I had such a pair of red cheeks, bright and shining like apples.

It is too cold for Mella to venture out; Irma is so busy with lessons she has little time, though we occasionally sandwich in a short walk.

Madame Goldschmidt has kindly given me a little fur coat to wear under my long one; fur is the only thing that really keeps one warm.

The tram drivers and conductors now wrap their heads up in *bashliks*, hoods with long ends that wind round the throat. They look very cold in spite of them, the tips of their noses, about all one can see of them, are so blue.

Sometimes we don't go out for days together. The beloved British constitutional seems unknown, the self-satisfaction with which an Englishman will say as he unfolds his napkin at dinner-time, "I walked ten miles to-day," or played so many rounds of golf, is wanting to the

Rumanian householder. If obliged to go out, he bundles himself up in fur coat and snow boots and returns as soon as he can. The children are looking forward to Christmas already. They have a short holiday then, about ten days. What would English boys and girls say to that?

Still, these children get what practically amounts to a holiday of three and a half months in the summer, which they spend chiefly in the open air.

The Goldschmidts took me to the opera last night, I *did* enjoy it. We heard "Rigoletto." Do you remember it was the last opera we heard together before dear Aunt Augusta was ill, and you made a martyr of yourself in such a noble manner?

Opera is given in the National Theatre alternately with national plays. Some of the actresses who perform in the latter were in the stage box with natural flowers in their hair.

The National Theatre is a large building in the Calea Victoriei; the interior has a handsome parquet where the officers congregate, and tiers of boxes.

The opera was well staged; it began at ten and there were long waits between the acts.

It appears these intervals are to spin out the time, as no true Rumanian likes to be home before midnight; the waiting time is spent in paying visits to each other's boxes.

Gilda sang well, the duke had a fine voice, but was an indifferent actor, Rigoletto himself was excellent. When the terrible end came Madame Goldschmidt retired to the back of the box till it was over; she has so much sensibility.

I enjoy being thrilled myself as long as it is not too horrible: I can't stand blood!

I am making one or two Christmas presents and have promised to fill the children's stockings. What a long time it is since Aunt Augusta used to fill ours for us! Do you remember the day when you refused to hang yours any more? You said such things were only for girls and children; you were twelve, I think. Are you staying at Talwood for Christmas? I am afraid you will find it rather lonely. Or perhaps you will go to The Towers? Believe me, I shall often think of you next week, and I know you will not forget your friend,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER XVI

Bukarest.

My dear Edmund,

There has been a long interval, I fear, between this and my last letter. I have been busy with the two Christmases and one or two children's parties; also lessons being "off" I have the two children on my hands.

First I must thank you again and again for your lovely present and for your kind thoughtfulness anent the customs. It does take the gilt off the gingerbread when one has to pay for a present. I am collecting a few small gifts which I will bring home to you when I come.

The sight of your Christmas card with its holly and mistletoe and fat robins—you remember my taste well—made me feel homesick. When I stood up in the ugly room where we have our services to sing "Hark! the Herald" I seemed to see the little church at home with its wreathed pillars, to smell the curious odour of pomatum, evergreens and old bones that pervades it. I

seemed to hear the rector's thin old voice as he quavered out "When the wicked man" as the Squire, like the one in the old story, let himself into his pew and studied the lining of his hat. Why are you always just late, Edmund? Perhaps you have reformed since my day. So you were to spend Christmas at The Hollies with the fair widow, her fairer daughter, and the son from India—soldier or civilian?

I suppose you will go together to the Ball at The Towers; we know what a pleasant place the conservatory is to sit out in.

Well, our Christmas is over and done with. We have had no holly and mistletoe, no turkey, plum pudding nor mince pies. We *have* had presents, we *have* had parties, some of us have over-eaten ourselves and are suffering in consequence. What Christmas is like in Orthodox houses I cannot tell, here in a Jewish household it is rather an absurdity. However, some of the relations are as much German as Rumanian, and of course they must keep Christmas. All the young people, shepherded by Mademoiselle Duval and myself, went to a pleasant party.

The drive to the house was almost the best part, I thought.

The streets were so full of busy people with wide grins on their faces, the shops so gay. We passed through one open market where in the daytime there are stalls of fruit, old clothes, birds in cages, basket-work of all kinds and a few plants.

At night these commonplace stalls look mysterious and suggestive, the flaring lights show up the dark eager faces of the vendors and shine on the piles of oranges, the waving strings of onions, sausages and other weird-looking things. The moon shone palely through drifting clouds, a scud of snow covered the dirty pavements. Sleigh bells rang; trams went clinking by; there was the sound of many feet, of shrill voices. Over all was the curious half-oriental smell which made Mella crinkle up her little nose. I found it fascinatingly suggestive of the East and rather liked it—in moderation.

Arrived at our destination, we unwound ourselves from our numerous wraps and entered a large room painted with curious frescoes. Here we found our hostess with the other guests. She is a handsome plump young woman, the mother of Flossie and Violet, the two dear little kids I mentioned before. We greeted our friends;

Mella very shy with her head generally hidden in my skirts.

We had an excellent tea, with cakes to eat, and chocolate to drink with whipped cream on the top, which Mella did not like, so Irma had a double "whack," as the boys say.

Then came an interval when I presume the elders were feeding; no one attempted to amuse the children, who were inclined to squabble in consequence. Violet made herself very fascinating, not being troubled with shyness like poor Mella. At last, just as the elder lads were taking to sparring, we were called into another room where was a fine Christmas Tree.

The children joined hands and sang lustily the old German song of "*Der Tannenbaum*," then the hostess distributed the presents. While this was proceeding, the children's eyes watching her every movement, the elders sat around in solemn state. I meanwhile hovered on the outskirts, belonging to neither party and trying to make Mella give pretty thanks for her share of the spoil. Another interval followed; I found Irma prowling round the tree seeking what she could devour; she pounced eagerly on some sweets that had been overlooked.

The English nurse received a watch and a silk blouse, so her employers are as generous as mine. Certainly great kindness was intended and shown, the young people seemed satisfied, but neither of the elders dreamt of playing with them as we do in mixed parties at home.

On Christmas Eve—Old Style—we went to the circus opposite. Mella was more alarmed than amused and had enough before we were half through the programme. I was not sorry to bring her out. There were some clever performing horses and some wonderful sea lions; the barking of the latter has disturbed my sleep for many nights.

Some of the items were contemptible; Irma was quite excited over them and thought everything wonderful.

These young people are a curious mixture; they have no religion and very little moral training. They are well educated in spite of an ignorance of geography, though this ignorance is not peculiar to Rumania by any means! Irma laughs at the idea of the existence of a devil, but is unsophisticated enough to excite herself over a circus or other entertainment at which an English child would turn up her nose.

Mademoiselle enjoyed the circus, she sat up in the humble "box" in a graceful attitude, wearing her best hat, and waved her tightly gloved hands with vivacity. She has a new excitement, she drinks as much black coffee as she is allowed, smokes more cigarettes than ever. When Madame Goldschmidt was away I caught a bad cold. Mademoiselle Duval shook her head over me. "You must have a doctor, Nanna; I can't undertake the responsibility of your being ill while Madame is away." This in the curious mixture of English, French and German which she uses in conversation with me.

The doctor was sent for accordingly. He came, a tall, rather handsome man about forty. His interview with me, with Mademoiselle as interpreter, lasted about five minutes, the rest of the afternoon he spent with Mademoiselle in the *salon* smoking cigarettes. Monsieur Alcalay's nose seems a trifle out of joint. He bears up well, however. I saw him the other day in a sleigh chatting with extraordinary animation to a lady wearing a hood who sat beside him. Do you remember my mentioning Amalia, the kitchenmaid whose attire was somewhat sketchy in Sinaia and who used to go out in the pneu-

monia blouse? She was afterwards under-housemaid, but has since been promoted to upper-housemaid, and I see her often. Victoria, the dark-eyed, was dismissed. It was discovered that she spent most of her nights out, and left the back door ajar that she might get in again undetected. This was naturally considered an invitation to burglars and she had to go.

I cannot understand the strong anti-Semitic feeling on the Continent. I had a prejudice against Jews myself—I think it is ingrained in many Christians—but since I have seen more of them I like and admire them; they are a wonderful people. I am told that there are 30,000 Jews in Bukarest; they are well-to-do, respectable and law abiding.

So many of my friends ask me about the Jews here, I find it difficult to learn anything, as being with Jews as I am I do not like to ask many questions. The English I meet do not take much interest in the Semitic question.

As far as I understand, the Jews have few or no legal rights and have to be naturalized before they can enter one of the professions. I was told a story of a naturalized Jew who was stoned the

first time he went to plead in the Law Courts, but I cannot vouch for the truth of it.

The Jews seem to pervade the country. They have an objection to manual labour; I believe they are muscularly weak, perhaps because they and their ancestors have always preferred to pay others to do the work.

In many of the country towns the Jews make up more than half the population, they live in houses without gardens or the pretty plants in tubs that I admire so much. They wear ugly clothes, and, unfortunately, have a trade in shoddy garments, which they are persuading the peasants to exchange for their own pretty costumes.

At Boutousi there lives a famous Rabbi who says he is the descendant of King David, and has a very high opinion of himself generally.

They have a fine Synagogue in Bukarest, but some of the country ones are very dirty places. When we were in Sinaia, the Jews there hired the empty house in the field next us for the Day of Atonement. They kept up the service all day, making such a curious noise. When they were tired, they squatted in the veranda with their praying scarves on. They ate nothing all

day, and must have been very tired and thirsty at the end of it.

There is an Anglican mission amongst Jews here conducted by an able young clergyman. He has some success, as of course the Jews gain materially, I mean as well as spiritually, by conversion.

Dr. Goldschmidt wishes he would keep his teaching and preaching to himself! He, the doctor, gets very indignant with those he calls "renegades." I went to see quite an excellent one-man picture show lately, I think the artist's name was Vernet. Dr. Goldschmidt would not go near it as the painter was once a Jew.

One evening last week I went with Dr. Goldschmidt and Clara to the practice of some Jewish choir. I was so amused at the people who came in, they were so exactly like each other. They sang some ancient hymns in Hebrew. If Miriam's song was anything like it, it is a pity she did not sing it before instead of after the battle, it would have saved some trouble.

I am so fond of being out that Madame Goldschmidt often asks me to go messages for her; when it is fine enough Mella comes too. My linguistic talents being what they are, I

occasionally get into difficulties when things don't turn out as I expect. Yesterday Mella and I went with a message to a dressmaker called Matilde; she is of the humble kind who "make up" frocks and is German by birth. She lives some way from the Strada Sapienței in a quaint part of the town, where the streets are narrow and the shops sell curious unknown objects. The passers-by are all in what I call fancy dress; some of the women wear lace over their heads, something after the fashion of a mantilla.

We trammed, Mella and I, it was too long a walk for her short legs. I have but the faintest idea what I should pay, so I tender a large coin and trust to the conductor to give me the correct change. As it is always different, I lose myself in the problem as to whether it proves his honesty or the reverse. What think you?

Matilde lives close to the tram terminus in a one-storied house in a churchyard. I knocked at the door, and delivered my well-conned message with startling glibness to the girl who opened it.

Horror! Matilde was out. For a moment I lost my presence of mind and glared at the

damsel, who grew red in the face and glared back. Then how I wrestled with that abominably complicated language to make her understand she must forward the said message to Matilde! I suppose she did, as I never heard anything more about it.

The people I meet here are most of them capital linguists; but as I told Dr. Goldschmidt, when we were talking about it, in the first place no one wants to learn Rumanian, and also they are always meeting people of different nationalities and hear various languages spoken. In England many educated people live and die without hearing any language but their own.

Of course this establishment is exceptional anywhere, four languages all spoken under the same roof, French, German, Rumanian, English.

I asked Dr. Goldschmidt one day what language he thought in, he seemed at home in so many. He thought a moment and said Rumanian. He has to use that in the Courts; he speaks French with his wife.

Dear old England! with all thy faults I love thee still!

Thank you, Edmund, for your suggestions, they are reasonable enough. All the same I

think I will keep to my original plan and if nothing unforeseen occurs stay my two years here; I can surely manage that. Of course any one leaving a pleasant free home such as mine was at Talwood would feel the slightest restriction, and the subordinate position is occasionally galling. Still, I have a better time than most governesses at home and I will "stick it," as the boys say. Of course, one is apt to get home-sick at this time of the year, one longs to hear the dear old Devon accent once more. So "*multi*," as they say here on New Year's Day. Children come round with flowers and touch Mella and wish her luck. At least they try to, but she generally hides in my cloak when she sees them coming.

Enjoy yourself and your open winter, ye hunter, and bless the Lord for it, only don't quite forget your old comrade

MILLIE ORMONDE.

P.S.—Mind you tell me what sort of time you had at The Towers. Was the conservatory as charming as ever?

LETTER XVII

Bukarest.

MY DEAR EDMUND,

Abuse me not! I have written you letters. I have either forgotten to post them or they have been lost in transit. Indeed, I can't remember what I wrote in them; you must try and take up the tale of my life where it has got to and not be disagreeable because you found The Towers' conservatory draughty, and I had a bad cold when the thermometer was many degrees below zero. I am quite well now and what is vulgarly called "bobbish."

We went to the gardens this morning and found there a regular plague of caterpillars; they were wriggling over all the benches and railings and dropped on the top of our heads from the trees as we passed under them. They are a thin black kind with a white line down their backs; where on earth do they all come from?

We have odd things in these gardens, don't we? In the autumn the whole place was covered

with white fluff from the black poplars lining either side of the broad walk which runs through the gardens; it was very "tickly" and made us sneeze. We saw, too, a horrid insect, about two inches long, with a thick head, it went along the ground with a curious bustling movement. A man who was passing crushed it hastily with heavy foot, he said its bite was dangerously poisonous and would produce fever.

We are nearing Easter. The yellow gogea is starring the grass; it is such a pretty flower, each bloom is like a king-cup with the growth of a polyanthus. The women have given up long ago selling their tight little bunches of snowdrops and grape hyacinths at five a penny—ten *bani*. The trees are coming into leaf, now and again the Russian wind blows; it is like all the east winds you ever felt rolled into one; I thought some one had slapped me the first time I turned a corner and met it face to face. Mella does not seem to feel it as much as I do, though it makes her cheeks the colour of a morella cherry. The post-card sellers once more decorate the bare walls and palings with their wares; the glass menders wander up and down the streets wailing their dismal cry.

Old Cookie is busy all day long boiling eggs hard, about two hundred of them in various colours. On Easter Sunday we shall copy the original hares of Germany and hide them all over the garden for the children to seek. A few will have to be put in very obvious places for Mella, and protected from the boys, who seem devoid of the chivalrous feeling towards the young and weak, which we do meet with at home sometimes. Mella is excited already and talks about the number of eggs she will find. We are able to sit on our balcony again and watch the folks go by. I saw a sailor this morning. He was dressed like an English bluejacket except that his vest was striped blue and white, and his trousers tighter at the ankles; he wore white kid gloves, which gave him an air of great distinction.

Rumania is proud of her Navy; it consists of one cruiser and some monitors.

We have been some of our old pleasant walks since the snow has gone and the wind nuisance abated. One walk we are fond of is through a village just outside the town. It is a pretty place built round a wide common frequented by the usual geese and donkeys, some pretty

flowers grow on it. The houses are, as usual, of one story and turn one side to the road, their white walls are almost hidden with creepers. Each cottage has a veranda and small garden belonging to it; a few have quite big plots under cultivation where the villagers grow vegetables for the Bukarest market.

Our little party creates much interest: Mella in her mail-cart pushed by a foreigner in a strange uniform, Irma in full talk alongside. Have I ever mentioned that the latter adorns her stout legs with white socks?

There is a big well and a tiny church with curiously painted pillars inside; I could not stay and examine them as I wished, for nothing would induce Mella to go inside.

On our way home yesterday we met some soldiers marching gaily to the sound of loudly blown bugles; we passed a man driving some goats; and stood in an angle of the bridge while a creaking cart laden with timber went by, the pale oxen staggering uncomfortably under the yoke. They always look to me as if the next step would be their last, but I believe it is only their inebriated form of progression. This

particular pair were ornamented with splashes of magenta on their foreheads.

The peasants are still wearing winter clothes; the driver was bunched up in front of the cart with a red embroidered cloak wrapped round him. Their dark faces often wear a look of mystery, though I dare say their ill-educated minds are practically empty, or they are wondering whether they will have any supper that night. We also met a row of wretched prisoners being marched to jail, each one sandwiched between two policemen with fixed bayonets. They looked uneasy and miserable, poor things! I think the Government might move them from place to place with less publicity.

I have just been to tea with a friend who teaches drawing and painting; she lives *au pair* in a Rumanian house. Her host—do you call him?—is a poet; the son of a peasant, he has risen to some Government post. He is not ashamed of his origin, and welcomes his old mother when she visits him on Sundays in her peasant dress.

The poet lives in a bungalow; the front door opens straight into the drawing-room, which is crowded with furniture including a grand piano; the walls are covered with pictures.

My friend has a small room at the back. I found her rather perturbed, and she told me over our tea that the household had just been increased by the advent of a young maidservant. The house was crowded before, and she could not imagine where the new-comer slept, so she asked the elder girl, a child about twelve. She answered with surprise, "Why, in John's room, of course," John being the butler.

Next time I write I will tell you about our masked ball which is to take place next week in honour of the Feast of Purim. I have never seen a masked ball, it should be amusing.

The Pic-pa-lac in its cage on the old pope's house is calling out its own name with irritating regularity. It's worse than a cuckoo on a May morning! With which horrible sentiment I will conclude for fear I shall perpetrate something worse and lose your esteem for ever.

Yours,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER XVIII

Bukarest.

My dear Edmund,

Do you still believe in the evil eye? If you do you must get some pure water and drop red-hot coals into it, this will avert the danger. I am not sure whether fingers are necessary or if tongs will do.

In case, however, you do not care or are too busy to do this I enclose you a *matrasoare*, or charm, to keep off evil. These are sold in the streets for small sums, and March is the correct time to buy them. It strikes me one can buy most things in the streets here. The hawkers are picturesque and vociferous. My admiration wanders from the graceful figure in blue linen who sells water in a wooden jug bound with brass to the man in white who pads to market on bare feet; a yoke is on his shoulders to which are attached wide flat baskets piled high with oranges. The charming costumes, the bright sunshine, the gaily painted shop-signs, the

gleaming domes, the numerous uniforms make a fascinating scene which I am never tired of watching.

I am writing this on the balcony; nearly the whole household are sleeping off the effects of the ball, which took place last night—and morning, as the last guest went at seven.

None of us in the house wore masks, Dr. Goldschmidt would not allow it. We all stood behind Madame Goldschmidt while, arrayed "en Cardinal," she received her guests.

The hall was cleared for dancing, seats put round the walls and all the other rooms open and lighted. The musicians were in the gallery. There were no extra decorations, I do not think there were even flowers on the supper-table. In the dining-room was a long *buffet* laden with good things.

It was amusing to see the people arrive, more so to the others than to me as, of course, they knew every one who was coming and tried to make out who was who as each masquerader came before Madame and bowed silently or spoke in a disguised voice.

Some wore plain dominoes and black masks, or painted gauze ones to go with their dresses.

These were not particularly original, the usual Pierrots and Pierrettes, Bacchantes, Kings, etc. Clara looked one of the best as a Japanese, in a real kimono and chrysanthemums. Dr. Goldschmidt looked most judicial in the black gown and curious little black hat that the judges wear. Mademoiselle would not dress up, she wore a high black velvet, of all things, and managed not to look hot. I went in powder and flowered muslin, a kind of Pompadour dress; I had no rouge, so pinched my cheeks to make them red. Some one asked about the "lovely" lady, so my efforts were appreciated. I hope, Edmund, that you are not smiling?

One charming French lady came as a Vivandière, she speaks English well. Dr. Goldschmidt kindly introduced her to me, as he did to one or two others with the same accomplishment. I danced several times and enjoyed myself, though of course it was not so amusing as if I knew anyone or was in a different position—not that anyone treated me as an inferior or anything of that sort.

I danced with a Roman soldier, he looked exactly like the pictures; he declared the ladies pinched him to see if his legs and arms were bare.

Don't be alarmed, *I* didn't. He had been to dances in England and remarked, with a grin, that the girls there were very obliging and pleasant. He went, I think, about machinery, so I can't tell what class of young person he met.

Some of the younger cousins had prepared what Madame called "a fun," they were quite as amusing as they were intended to be; once there was quite a long pause while several people sat in a ring on the floor and played a mysterious game.

There were no programmes.

At one time the hall was so crowded one could hardly move. It appears that during the Feast of Purim, masqueraders can go uninvited from one ball to another, though it is etiquette to go before supper-time, as the hostess could not be expected to provide for numbers of unexpected guests. Quite a number of strange folk turned up last night, mostly wearing dominoes and speaking in squeaky voices. Clara was worried and interested with one who kept squeaking into her ear and whom she could not recognize.

We had supper somewhere in the sma' hours,

a fine "spread." It was put out on two long tables in the dining- and billiard-rooms, we all went in anyhow and sat down as we liked. The service as usual was poor.

I sat next the Vivandière, and Madame Goldschmidt came herself to see if I was getting on well; I had boned turkey, chocolate *gâteau* with whipped cream, and champagne—the sweet kind foreigners like.

There was more dancing after supper, and finally the company departed by daylight, much to the interest of a small crowd who had collected. Cheers were raised at the sight of the Roman soldier, who had to unhelm before he could get under the hood of his carriage.

Mademoiselle Duval disappeared during the greater part of the evening; I have my suspicions where she was, but will not give her away. She came up to me as I was going to try and get a nap about seven this morning. "Did you not see him, Nanna? Wasn't he splendid? I knew *him* the minute he came in, no one else has a figure like that!" Certainly there was no one present half so big and stout, so I assented to her remarks. I wonder if any more was added to the diary that night.

I did not get any sleep, of course the children were wide-awake and full of talk, so they had to be dressed and breakfasted. I sent them into the study. Presently Mella came rushing in at the opposite door with tears streaming down her face and screaming: "Nanna! Nanna!" I never saw terror so plainly shown on any face before.

I gathered her into my arms and she sobbed herself to sleep. Later, I found that Irma had put on a mask some one had left in the study and frightened the child with it. I gave her a good "wigging."

She knew Mella's terror of masks, as one day near Christmas-time we went into a shop, and while I was busy trying to make the shopman understand my wants Mella suddenly began to howl; the more I petted and coaxed and scolded, the louder she roared. We could not make ourselves heard, and had to leave the shop without getting what we wanted. As we went through the door, we passed a string of masks hanging from the lintel; Mella glanced, gave a fresh and more piercing yell and shot through the door. We could not help laughing, though embarrassed at the attention we naturally excited.

It is tea-time. Mademoiselle is sleeping soundly. Irma looks weary as she wrestles with a French exercise. Madame Goldschmidt is tired and roams aimlessly from room to room in her mauve tea-gown. I am afraid she will have an *accès* if she does not rest soon.

The sun is shining on the burnished roof of the little chapel opposite and turning it to gold. Mella is tired of running up and down the balcony with her hoop, and is trying to squeeze her face between the stucco balusters; she is too small to look over the top.

I think I must amuse the little lady a bit, then take her and Irma for a walk. So good-bye.

Yours as ever,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER XIX

Bukarest.

My dear Edmund,

Let me beg you not to encourage a certain little carping spirit that seems to get hold of you now and then! How do you wish me to sign myself? I am yours as ever, why should I change because we happen to be divided by a few hundred miles? I am as I ever was, though perhaps not as *you* thought I was. Be reasonable, Squire, as old William would say. It takes a longer vision to see from Talwood to Bukarest than from The Hall to the lodge gate; a certain amount of imagination, too, to see things as others see them, and still more to put yourself in his or her place.

Let us think of other things.

We are having quite lovely weather; I have at last become reconciled to the idea of leaving my umbrella behind; I have had some chaff over my British fondness for carrying it with

me wherever I go. It is difficult to realize all climates are not as changeable as ours.

We had a little excitement on Easter Sunday, not your Easter Sunday, but ours; it's at a different time, a good deal later in the year.

I was standing on the balcony waiting until it was time to get ready for church, when I thought I was seized with vertigo; I felt very sick, the whole place was rocking. It was an unusually bright cloudless day.

Then from inside the house came sundry shrieks and screams, presently the whole household scurried into the gardens squealing like scared rabbits. It then dawned upon me there was an earthquake.

It was quite a severe shock and frightened the inhabitants of this city not a little.

We had all recovered ourselves by lunch-time; and several young people lunched with us. After we had all fed and, as usual, fed well, Mademoiselle and I went into the garden and hid the coloured eggs in the grass and amongst the bushes.

The young people rushed out at our call, and soon found them with a good deal of wrestling and scratching amongst the younger ones.

I stood guard over a particularly large red egg and did a kind of vocal magic music for Mella's benefit. She was some time finding it in spite of my efforts, and was very pleased with herself when she did, and ran about showing it to those of the company she was not too shy to accost: then she ate it.

The eggs were quickly eaten in spite of lunch. At each meal now most of the family eat two or three before beginning their ordinary meals; as an appetizer, I suppose.

We spend a great deal of time out of doors, though it is rather too soon for meals in the garden. March, April and May are the pleasantest months here; it begins to get too hot in June.

Is your hay-making over yet?

One day last week, when we were in the Cismegiu Garden, men were mowing the long grass, and the delicious scent of it reminded me of home. Every now and then they stopped work and put their scythe-blades against a stone and hit them violently with another, keeping time together. I suppose they were sharpening their implements, do you think the operation can have the desired effect?

The lilacs are in bloom, and pink-tipped daisies peep amongst the grass.

Mella shares my fondness for churchyards; I wander meditatively amongst the tombs while she picks daisies and white clover. We had a shock the other day when a policeman objected to our doing so in the churchyard of St. Stefan; at least I suppose he was forbidding us from his expression and the sound of his voice, as I did not understand a word he said. Mella is not nearly as afraid of a policeman as Irma, who is in terror of them, why I don't know. I tell her she must have an uneasy conscience.

A service was going on in the church near, so I went in. A young man, in the usual pope's robe and quaint hat, trailed from one lectern to another and read from a big book in a harsh mumbling voice. There are no seats in these Greek churches; I did not wish to prostrate myself on the cold stones as the congregation was doing, so I did not stay long. The said congregation consisted of one ancient dame who looked like a heap of old clothes as she lay on the floor; she managed to turn her head for a peep at the foreigner as I went by.

Mella, as usual, refused to come in, which gave another reason for hurry, though I could see her little figure through the open door as she waited on the steps.

Mella and I spend the greater part of the day in each other's company; the other young people are busy with their lessons. Dancing and gymnastics are given up for the present, professors come and go. Mademoiselle Duval makes Clara and Irma work their hardest; she herself seems in an excited state.

Dr. Goldschmidt keeps Monsieur Alcalay busy, so we seldom see him. Amalia, the fair, wears a crescent-shaped bow in her hair in the afternoons; and the blouse with the wide insertion, or one just like it, has appeared once more. I hope she is quite honest, as I have found her several times in the nursery; once she was on the balcony leaning over the railings. I saw her from the front gate, where I had stopped to speak to the secretary. She gave me such a funny look when I met her afterwards on the stairs.

Yesterday Madame Goldschmidt took me to such a quaint place called, in Rumanian, "The Hall of Old Things."

We drove, Madame Goldschmidt, Mella and I, through a queer part of the town with narrow streets and old houses. We passed ancient courts, one was a long horse-shoe shape with a balcony round it; another was reached through an archway painted in strong crude colours.

"The Hall of Old Things" is, I suppose, really a big second-hand shop or market. It is divided into cubicles; in these lurk obsequious shopmen with Semitic countenances, ready and anxious to sell anything, from a flat-iron to a rich brocade, from a feather mattress to a sacred picture.

Madame Goldschmidt bought some quaint pieces of china, which she hopes are old Saxe. A gentleman in white china resembling Adam in costume, before the Fall, or perhaps Abel as there is a curly baa-lamb beside him, sits pensively under a tree of an unwholesome green but of much solidity, a lady stands beside him shading herself with a red sunshade. It is most fascinating and I *should* like to have it. I bought a small icon, or sacred picture, of the Virgin and Child. It is made of silver and gold, or pewter and gilt; the faces are painted and inserted at the back of oval openings. It is framed

in black and glazed, and is very curious and interesting.

There is certainly an agricultural flavour about Bukarest, which should please a bucolic like yourself.

Beside the market, with its heaps of red peppers, onions and other fruits of the earth, we often see a herd of twittering turkeys driven through the town; on our way home from The Hall of Old Things we got mixed up with a large flock of sheep and lambs with two donkeys walking solemnly in the middle of them. They were driven by two huge dogs and a peasant. The latter was dressed in a charming dun-coloured suit with an embroidered waistcoat. His wife strode beside him; she wore two embroidered aprons, one in front and one behind, and carried what I thought was a brown-paper parcel. It turned out to be a baby! *A propos de moutons*, no butchers' shops are allowed in the streets, and rightly, to my thinking. What can be more horrible than the rows of carcasses displayed in English thoroughfares?

Now, Edmund, prepare to be shocked.

Last Sunday I bought a hat!

I do not mean that you are to be shocked at

the purchase of a hat, it is the most natural thing a woman can do, but at doing it on a *Sunday*.

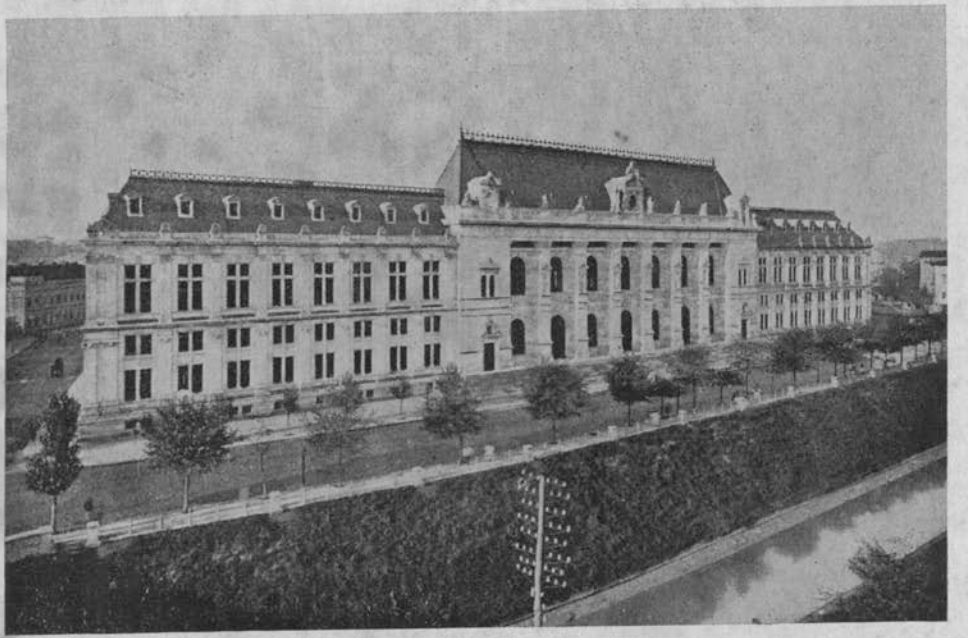
The reasons I did so are twofold.

First, I wanted to indulge in the pleasure of doing what I ought not to do; secondly, because the hat I wanted was in a shop where only Rumanian is spoken, and Sunday was the morning when Regina could come with me to buy it.

It is a pretty hat, black net and violets, sufficiently becoming to make it worth while imperilling my immortal soul.

Seriously, is it not a shame the poor shop-people get so few holidays? Some of the shops close at 1 o'clock on Sundays and that is all the holiday the assistants get. People complain of an English Sunday. I for one shall be very sorry if we ever imitate our continental neighbours and make it simply a day of pleasure and fatigue; tempers on Saint Monday are appalling.

A gipsy woman came into the garden yesterday, and told our fortunes after the usual hand-crossing. She told mine with a pack of cards, a thimble and a piece of black thread, the latter she presented to me twisted up and looking like a black spider. She told me to keep it for luck;



PALAIS DE JUSTICE, BUKAREST

I, however, enclose it to you, knowing you to be a superstitious person. Take care of it, I shall expect to see it when I return.

I saw another funeral yesterday, such a curious one. The hearse was drawn by two horses, it had a little carriage joined to the back of it like the compartment of a luggage-van. The coffin was bright red; it was followed by two women and one man, who had to run, as the hearse went with great rapidity. This gave a cheerful effect, and prevented any unwholesome sentiment.

We had processions round the little chapel opposite on Good Friday. A cross was carried on a kind of altar illuminated with candles; and people passed and repassed under a canopy of silk. The processionists chanted just like Indians to their tomtoms, the clapper bell clapped very loud, the pope droned prayers.

It was a dark night, and the effect of the light and the vestments pretty and quaint.

I have fallen in love. The "object" is a man who sells Turkish delight in the street. He wears white linen trousers, so tight that he must have been poured into them, the usual frilled and pleated shirt and sleeveless coat worked in pink, green and yellow wools, a large blue and red tie,

and a soft black hat. He is especially fascinating when it rains, and he wraps himself in a red embroidered cloak with a pointed hood which becomes his dark face and brilliant eyes. I am heart-broken as I fear he is after Amalia, so pity

Yours as ever,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER XX

Constantinople.

My dear Edmund,

You will be astonished to get a letter from me with this address on top! One of the dreams of my life is realized. I am staying in Constantinople! It ought to have many notes of interrogation after it, but they have gone out of fashion with crinolines.

We came yesterday. Not the Goldschmidt family, they are safely, at least I hope they are safely, in Odessa.

We means a French lady and myself. The said lady is not Mademoiselle Duval; she is so different that except for their speech you would not know them to be of the same nationality, and even then the accent is different.

Mademoiselle Marie Lorel is from Normandy. In appearance she is of middle height, with large, clear blue eyes, and a good deal of fair hair, which is often rather untidy. She is clever and quick, but I don't think has depth of in-

tellect; she has charm and vivacity, is emotional, and has a sympathetic, affectionate nature. In fact, Edmund, she is a dear, and I love her. It is not a sudden friendship, we have met often. She dines at Strada Sapienței sometimes, as she is in a family connected with the Goldschmidts; one of those mysterious situations, of which there are so many abroad, where the lady occupying it seems in turn nurse, governess and housekeeper.

We have both got a holiday. It should be spelt with a capital, but I know such grammatical irregularities displease your well-ordered mind. I don't know how Marie has gained hers, I have been too busy to ask; my family have gone to stay with relations in Odessa. Madame Goldschmidt comes from there. It appears her family have large flour-mills there and she is going to stay with her brother, who lives in a great house with a terrace overlooking the Black Sea. Regina has gone with them, so I should have been an unnecessary expense, and Madame thinks a holiday will do me good. I quite agree with her.

She told me that her grandfather used to be a great exporter of fleeces from Russia to England,

but one day he saw some fleeces which had been sent from Australia. He felt, he examined. His technical knowledge told him that no sheep in Russia could provide such wool, so he sold his business and started flour-mills. He and his successors buy wheat in grain from the peasants, grind it, and export it straight by sea from Odessa; Madame said in their own barges, but surely she must have mistaken the English word—barges could not cross the Mediterranean?

Marie and I left Bukarest in the middle of the day, and travelled the six-hour train journey to Constanza.

It was an interesting journey down the great valley of the Danube. Since Monsieur Autipas was in charge of them, the fisheries of the Danube have increased enormously in value, and are now worth thousands of pounds to the State. The fisherfolk are a race by themselves—Old Believers who were chased out of Russia. I am told they are a curious people with weird customs of their own.

In September, the Rumanian shepherds come down from the Carpathians to feed their flocks over the vast pasture lands.

We saw no human beings the whole length of our journey, though a moving cloud of dust on the white roads occasionally betrayed their whereabouts.

The train sped through the flat country, with its rich pasture fields intersected with the long roads leading up to the white villages which nestled amongst high trees. There were buildings that might have been churches of some kind, but I missed the pretty church towers and spires of our English villages.

As we neared the mouth of the river, the pastures changed to wide stretches of rushes and water. The sun set and we had a wonderful sunset over the water and the swaying reeds; a solitary heron flapped heavily away.

We thundered over the famous Chernavodă Bridge, whose soldier statue I mistook for a live sentry! By the way, I read the other day that this line was built by English engineers, and some one in Bukarest told me that the bridge itself was made by a Frenchman and cost a million francs. It seems that no one works in Rumania except the Government and strangers.

It was nearly dark as we slid through the dimly

lighted streets of Constanza, the one port of the Rumanians.

I will draw a veil over the voyage. The Black Sea was very black indeed and we were both exceedingly ill! Our luggage was not secured in any way, and slid from one side of the cabin to the other the whole blessed night.

The entrance to the Bosporus is so sudden and so narrow that badly navigated ships often run on to the rocks at the corner. We may have done this ourselves for aught we knew or cared, anyway we got off again in good time to get to our destination at the right hour.

We had charming peeps, through the port-holes, of the banks of the Bosporus, so near that we could plainly see grey forts and white palaces embowered in trees; and at last, about seven in the morning, we climbed on deck with wobbly legs and eager eyes.

The first thing that struck me as I looked at the gesticulating crowd was the beautiful effect produced by the hundreds of crimson fezes with the sun shining on them. It was a beautiful morning. A golden haze hung over the city resting on its seven hills, and on the Golden Horn, full of steamers and ships of all kinds, and little

restless boats pointed at either end. We were so excited at finding ourselves at last in the city of Constantine that we restrained ourselves with difficulty from running down the gangway, and disgracing ourselves before the dignified Turkish custom-house officers.

As we landed, we were accosted by a little pock-marked Greek in shabby black clothes. He said his name was Achille and that he was a guide. He offered his services and we accepted them, as we did not know how to get our things through the custom's. We afterwards discovered he was not one of the regular guides at all and really knew very little about the sights.

The *douanier*, an impassive Turk, was thorough. He looked through every illustrated paper, every little book I possessed with great care. We asked the reason why, and were told it was in case I had a picture of the Sultan. It appears the Sultan is the image of God, no one can have a picture of God! Needless to say, a picture of Abdul Hamid was not amongst my possessions and we got away at last. A big *hamal* piled our luggage on a sorry-looking cab and we drove off to the Rue Iskender.

After a little trouble, when Achille showed

himself very stupid, we arrived at the Home provided by the *Union Internationale des Amis des Jeunes Filles*, which was where we had engaged a room.

The directress is a German and a charming woman, who speaks English better than I do. She was brought up in Smyrna next door to an English family.

We have a large room with an uninteresting look out into a back yard, but it is clean and comfortable. We pay one franc fifty a day. For this we get breakfast, of coffee and toast, at eight, luncheon, with three or four courses, at twelve, tea at four, and supper, also several courses, at eight. We have to "do" our own room; but who minds that? Certainly not two lively females "on pleasure bent"; also the Greek housemaid turns it out once a week. She will insist on talking to me in Greek, which of course I cannot follow, and, if anyone attempts to interpret, pushes them contemptuously aside and continues her lengthy speeches. Didn't I tell you before how unfortunate it is to look so intelligent as I do?

The cook is an object of great beauty. A tall young man with pure Greek features, deep blue

eyes and dark hair curling closely to his well-shaped head. He is like a statue come to life.

He provided us with globe artichoke soup to-day and lamb stewed with caraway seeds; rather curious dishes, but quite eatable.

The Home is nearly full. Besides ourselves there is a Miss Dering, a permanent guest, who teaches English, I think; a French Madame from Paris; a Belgian governess; two German ladies from the Lutheran school at Bukarest; and a Russian lady, who is staying a few nights *en route* for Alexandria. English is generally spoken, as there are also three Englishwomen waiting for engagements as governesses.

The old French Madame was delighted to meet a compatriot; she does not understand English. When she and Marie meet each other the noise is astonishing; I could not think what was happening on the landing till Marie explained.

We have wandered a little about our neighbourhood and I am not at all disappointed. The place is picturesque beyond description. The houses in the narrow streets are high and flat, and are painted different colours, blues,

pinks and browns, and on the flat roofs many-hued garments are drying.

This part of the town is Pera, where we landed is Galata, Stamboul is over the bridge which crosses the Golden Horn. The streets are very badly paved and very steep. To get up from Galata to Pera the tram has four horses, and at a particular turn in the road a big black man runs ahead and blows lustily a great horn.

And the dogs! They lie curled up like great foot-muffs in every imaginable place. They are big creatures with thick smooth coats, and vary from dark yellow to white in colour. They are the scavengers of the city and quite harmless until after dark, unless of course you tread on them, when they *may* turn and rend you.

One of the saddest sights I have seen was a little pet dog being led through the streets; his evident desire to lie on his back and wave obsequious paws was quite pathetic.

I have not seen a single cat!

There are thousands of pigeons everywhere, and plenty of horses; many of the latter wear heavy blue necklaces to keep off the evil eye. The streets are full of people. Constantinople contains more Greeks than Turks; and, as they

are the industrious part of the population and own nearly all the shops, it is very awkward when they are at war with each other.

The Greek women are unveiled and generally have well-dressed hair. I don't think Turkish ladies walk at all, but there are plenty of women about wearing black veils and shapeless cloaks of large-patterned materials.

We see, too, soldiers in uniform, stout pashas in blue and gold with epaulets and lots of buttons, either riding Arab horses or sitting comfortably in victorias; pack horses and mules, some laden with huge baskets, others with logs of wood.

Outside the cafés are small tables which overflow the pavements on to the road, men sit at these and drink coffee and smoke long pipes; this they do all day, so how they earn their living I don't know. Perhaps they are not the same men and only look alike to our unaccustomed eyes!

One man stalked along in front of us wearing crimson trousers with two box pleats in the back and a very short jacket, on his head the dominating fez.

There are numbers of shops where these are

made, filled with brass stands, which I mistook for coffee-pots!

At the corners of the streets one can buy tiny cups of coffee at one penny each. Turkish coffee, as you very likely know, is ground very fine and boiled with sugar, the grounds are left in and it is drunk without milk. Each cup is heated separately over a brazier in a tiny brass saucepan with a very long handle.

We have made an excellent arrangement for paying current expenses. Marie has a bag, every morning we each put in the same amount, every evening we divide what is left. It saves such a lot of trouble. The German ladies spend the whole evening trying to arrange their accounts.

This afternoon Achille conducted us to Stamboul. First we went to the *Crédit Lyonnais* and changed our money. We were given some coins like florins and a number of small ones more like limpet shells than anything else. I thought they had been palmed off on us as ignorant strangers, but they were accepted without a murmur. The men who take the money on the Bridge wear white coats and look like cricket umpires gone wrong. There are only

two Bridges crossing the nine miles of the Horn, and these are so low that steamers have to doff their funnels before they can pass under them.

We wandered through the Great Bazaar. It is a fascinating place with narrow, low-roofed passages; there are shops on either side and pigeons fly amongst the blue arches. These shops had no windows, some displayed no goods, only comfortable divans for the would-be customer to rest on. There were some filled with all manner of curios. In one place was a row of turbaned gentlemen busily working Singer sewing machines; they were embroidering cushion covers at a great pace, the kind you see sold at fancy bazaars in England, done in chain stitch.

We visited St. Sophia. The great mosque is a delicate buff colour, charming against the clear blue sky, and has some big trees near it. We were provided with loose slippers, to put over our boots, and went in between the heavy leather curtains.

Inside, the building is pale grey with a mosaic roof and carved galleries. The great dome in the centre has shields round it and winged angels whose heads have been replaced by golden

bosses. It is lighted with hundreds of little lamps, the shape of jam-pots, strung on wire.

A small cross carved on one of the grey pillars gives one a sudden thrill and a feeling of disgust against the Faithful, who are either droning prayers or rocking themselves backwards and forwards in a very ecstasy of devotion. Some prostrate themselves and hit their heads violently against the floor. We were shown the imprint of a hand said to be that of Mahomet II, the Conqueror. Marie gazed with interest, but I had doubts! Achille was a failure: he knew no history, true or otherwise, and just marched us from place to place.

He took us next to the Hippodrome, which we just looked at, and drank from the fountain given by the German Emperor; I do not admire it.

We walked to the Musée, which is charmingly situated amongst a number of trees and has a fine view up the Bosporus. Here we admired the tomb of Alexander the Great, beautifully carved in rose marble, more tombs and the mummified body of a King of Sidon, a nasty sight.

By this time we were feeling very tired, so we bid Achille good-bye and trailed back to the

Rue Iskender. On the way, we bought caraway bread and two fresh eggs at a dark little shop, into which one fell from the street.

We boiled the eggs in Marie's etna and ate them with the caraway bread and tea *sans* milk. It was a funny repast, but we enjoyed it after our long tramp.

Here endeth the first day and my first letter from Constantinople.

Your fatigued but affectionate

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER XXI

Constantinople.

My dear Edmund,

No letter has been forwarded to me yet, but it does not follow that one has not arrived, as Monsieur Alcalay is rather casual; if it has been written, it will appear in due course.

We are still enjoying lovely weather. A friend writing to me from Bukarest said it had been too fine there and prayers to St. Dimitri had been freely offered. At present he has made no response. Perchance he sleepeth, etc., like Baal of old!

We have been climbing the Tower of Galata, which you see standing in the foreground of most pictures of Constantinople. I should know why it was built, but I don't, so no inconvenient questions, please.

The Russian lady went with us. She cannot speak English, only German and Russian, so she and I communicate with each other with "nods and becks and wreathèd smiles." She was much

amused at the care with which I counted every step I mounted. There are two hundred of them, very dirty, indeed the whole interior is excessively dirty and full of pigeons.

Near the top of the Tower is a narrow balcony, which runs right round it outside, in one corner of it a fig-tree is growing, its root amongst the masonry. I wonder if it bears any fruit? Marie was afraid of vertigo, and she and the Russian lady held on to each other in the doorway while I ran round the balcony.

The view was splendid. The three towns of Pera, Galata and Stamboul were spread out before us, the Golden Horn with its glittering surface gay with ships, the Bosporus wound like a ribbon towards the Black Sea.

There were a few red roofs amongst the brown, here and there a touch of gold gleamed from the domes of the mosques, and slender minarets showed white against the clear blue sky.

We parted with the Russian at the foot of the Tower, and walked down a narrow and very picturesque street to the Bridge. We paid out some limpet-like coins to the white-clad toll-keepers and made our way down some

rickety steps to the untidy jetty, from which the steamers start for Haida Pacha.

One of the charms of Constantinople is that all the best excursions are on the water, in well-found paddle-steamers away from smoke and dust.

Marie always carries the bag, so she buys the tickets; and I think it is very clever of her, as some of the Turks do not understand French and she has to resort to pantomime.

We were soon over the other side, and for the first time in my life I set foot on the great Continent of Asia. It was a thrilling moment! Marie laughed at my excitement.

We wandered over the lovely European cemetery, which is kept in beautiful condition and is planted with many flowering shrubs. The Judas tree is in full bloom, and as there are many here they make lovely bits of colour. You know it and its legend, don't you?

It has flowers of purplish pink; the legend is that Judas hanged himself on it, and when his blood rushed out it dyed the white flowers and they have remained pink to this day.

We saw the obelisk that Queen Victoria put up to the soldiers that died in the Crimea. It

has inscriptions in four languages: English, French, Turkish and Sardinian, the four allies of that dreadful war.

We sat for a long time on a bank, which sloped down to the Sea of Marmora, and faced Stamboul with its domes and palaces and, further off, the Princes Isles floating in a golden mist. The whole of Constantinople is surrounded with cemeteries, melancholy places planted with cypress-trees that grow straight and black against the sky, and with tombstones at all angles.

I am told that Turks never bury more than one person in a grave, which is one of the reasons cemeteries are so numerous. Men have a turban carved on their tombs, women have nothing, poor dears!

I wonder if there are any Turkish suffragettes?

We grew hungry, women cannot live on sight-seeing alone, so we went in search of tea. We visited the lodge where the gardener lives and wrote our distinguished names in the visitors' book. I stroked an odd-looking cat, a mixture of tortoise-shell and tabby; it was very pleased with my attentions and purred like any ordinary puss.

We had tea at the station restaurant, a most

unpleasant place, full of flies and little tables with dirty table-cloths and people jabbering at the tops of their voices. We had dry biscuits and weak tea in tumblers; it wasn't a nice tea, but it was a new experience. Then we wandered happily back to our steamer, and so home.

On the way back we saw Mount Olympus—the Asiatic one. I saw it first, a great white mountain with the sun on its peaks and its base shrouded in mist. Marie declared it was only a cloud, and would not be convinced till we reached home and I showed her the guide book. Baedeker says it is one of the finest sights.

Marie and I get on together perfectly. She has the quicker mind and will grasp a meaning or find out a new route while I am thinking things over; I have more reading and general information.

Nothing pleases me more than recognizing things and people that I have read about. To-day we passed a man seated at the corner of the street writing fortunes in the sand. He was blind, and had a shallow box filled with sand, on which he wrote with his finger or a piece of stick.

Turks and stations are most incongruous,

but all the same useful. We have just returned from a pleasant excursion by rail from Stamboul to Yédi Koulé.

We were advised not to go without a guide, but that luxury adds so much to the expense, and we determined to risk it.

Marie took the tickets, and we entered a very dusty railway carriage. At the further end was a young couple, they looked like Greek Jews.

The girl was rather pretty and when she heard me speaking English she became most animated. "I can 'peak too," she said. The young man gave a gasp of admiration. He wore a straw hat and was no Turk. The girl went on to tell me that she was taught at the English mission school; and we became quite friendly.

The views from the train were most interesting. As usual, we had a fine day, though there was a cold wind blowing off the sea. All round the coast are the old walls and fortifications of ancient Roman times; they are jagged and broken and we could see the sea dashing up against them, sending white spray right on to the line.

We passed quaint old wooden houses with windows and grilles tightly shut, and went so slowly we could see everything there was to see.

There were fields and fields of globe artichokes with their beautiful serrated leaves of silver green; nursery gardens with leisurely gardeners. In one field an elderly Turk, looking like a gentleman—all Turks look like gentlemen—sat cross-legged on the ground, weeding. He carefully dug up all the weeds within reach, contemplated his work for a minute or so, then dragged himself slowly along in the same position and began again. As our train puffed leisurely by, he rested from his arduous toil and watched it with solemn interest.

Turks hate manual labour.

There were orchards full of fruit-trees snowy with blossom, and fig-trees with leaves just appearing on their angular branches.

We reached Yédi Koulé in fair time, and walked out to see the old Castle of the Seven Towers. It is very like other old castles, with its round towers and its great broken walls against which the waves were breaking. The middle of the place is taken up with a nursery garden intersected by uneven paths. There is a deep well worked by horses with blinkers over their eyes.

Inside one tower there was a large white dog

with nine puppies, and she and the whole family were most friendly. I was playing with them, and Marie was rambling about, when we noticed a wild-looking man coming towards us. He wore a kind of rough flannel jacket and his hair was long and matted. He advanced towards us, shouting and waving his arms.

Marie began fumbling in her bag. She told me afterwards she had brought a big knife with her and was preparing to sell our lives dearly, when it suddenly struck us he was really a benevolent being, who was trying to direct us on the right way. He immediately became an interesting-looking person worthy of a kodak.

We retraced our steps and took the right and narrow way through the garden. It was a pretty path, and there were plenty of wild flowers growing in the uncultivated places. Thistles with variegated leaves, dead nettle, speedwell, coltsfoot, a very pretty sweet-smelling pea, yellow vetchlings, poppies, mauve woodruff, wallflowers and marigolds. The latter are everywhere, growing over rubbish heaps and in waste places, making pretty spots of colour against grey walls and green shutters.

Some great birds hovered above our heads.

I thought they were kites; Marie suggested eagles!

I can't help wondering what would have happened if Marie *had* gone for the man with her knife. Would he have done for both of us, and, if he had, would he have rolled our bodies into the sea or would he have left us to be eaten by the white dog and her puppies? What a horrible idea.

There's the supper bell. I must fly. Where's the letter?

Yours as ever,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER XXII

Constantinople.

My dear Edmund,

Dear me! so the blood of the Talbots boils at the idea of my being in a Home partly supported by charity. I am afraid the Talbot blood must continue to boil, for I have no intention whatever of leaving here until my holiday is up. As I pay one franc fifty a day, my self-respect is preserved; such general charity is not galling.

Your letter was welcome, but why will you always harp on the same string? I will not return to Talwood yet—if ever—at any rate not before my two years are up, put that out of your mind. I am not often determined, but as no one is here to persuade me otherwise I remain firm.

I heard from Bukarest that rain has fallen at last. Dimitri was ineffective, but another saint was carried round, followed by thousands of people and about a hundred popes. If the latter

wore the gorgeous vestments usual in the Orthodox Church, the effect must have been fine.

I have seen a stork, or rather two storks! One was sitting on its nest at the top of a house, the other was flying along with its long legs stretched out behind it. He came up to where his wife was sitting and there was such a klipper-klapping. I wondered what they were saying to each other, but there was no Hans Andersen to interpret for us. We saw the pair excellently.

Marie and I were seated on rush-bottomed chairs in the great cemetery at Eyoub, the German ladies were again with us. The cemetery runs up the side of a hill, and from the little house at the top one looks right down the Golden Horn and away over the two Bridges, all that the enterprise of Turkey has built across its nine miles of length.

Eyoub is a clean village with one or two little shops. We bought some of the nicest biscuits that I have ever eaten at one of them.

There is also a noted mosque, but no unbelievers are allowed to cross its threshold—not

even the German Emperor was allowed to poke his august nose into its archways.

To-day the four of us lunched at a real Turkish restaurant as distinguished from a cosmopolitan one.

Marie went up to a man in the street and asked him to direct us to one. He obligingly led the way—Marie always gets these people to do what she wants—and as we filed through the narrow by-ways and alleys the two Germans clutched each other. "He will assassinate us! he will assassinate us!" they whispered.

However, they followed, as they dared not be left behind. I tried to explain in French—which is our medium of conversation—that it was unlikely one man, however blood-thirsty, should take four large and able-bodied females into a corner and slay them all. They continued their lamentations until we came to the door of the restaurant. It looked invitingly clean and devoid of tragedy.

It was situated, and still is, I suppose, in a little square surrounded with lofty houses. Close to the door stood a huge stove presided over by a very stout Turk. On the stove were

large basins of food steaming freely and sending out most appetizing smells.

We four had a table to ourselves. The Germans sat down timidly, looking out of the backs of their eyes like rabbits.

The table-cloth was spotlessly clean, as was the china, and the food well cooked.

We were the only women in the place, and the men looked amusedly at us as we chatted together in our three different languages. We had *kabob*, *pilaff* and a *confiture* of oranges and apricots. The difficulty on these occasions is to know what to drink, as we are all teetotallers; in fact, water is too dangerous a drink here unless it is boiled, and then it is flat and nasty. We ended by drinking nothing with our food and coffee after it.

I forget what we paid for our meal, but I am sure it was something reasonable, as there were no protests from the Germans.

After lunch we made our way once more to the Bridge and took ship for Scutari. Again we were fortunate in the weather. The sun shone, the wind blew softly off the sea. Olympus displayed itself with its usual grandeur, rising majestically in vast purity against the azure sky.

Forgive tall language, it suits the subject.

Arrived at Scutari, we walked slowly up the steep, narrow street. Quaint low shops nestled between lofty houses with closed grilles. We passed a little courtyard with a fountain in the centre. The houses were of grey unpainted wood, at the top of the street was an inn covered with wistaria; the golden-green branches were stretched out to make a shelter for the outside tables, and the cool grey of the wood with the mauve clusters of wistaria, the golden-green leaves and the pale Turkish sky made a wonderful harmony of colour.

We gazed and passed on.

Outside the town we came to the usual cemetery, and sat down on the tombs to await the hour of the service of the howling dervishes, the object of our excursion.

As we sat waiting, with the cypresses standing like an army of sentinels round us, a shepherd went by. He looked as if he had stepped out of the "Child's Bible" with his buff-coloured turban, one long end hanging over his shoulder, his short tunic and his thin bare legs. He carried a crook, and walked swiftly along the dusty road leading his sheep. There were as

many black as white sheep in his little flock.

The service at the dervish monastery began at four, and we went there in good time.

Just as we reached the small gate leading into the grounds, a huge black dervish came out and carolled the prayer. He had one of the biggest voices I have ever heard even in this land of big voices, the notes echoed and re-echoed down the street. He looked at us in such an insolent way that my blood, like that of the Talbots, began to boil. There was a kerria trained over the little gate, and I am sure whenever I see the yellow blossoms in the future I shall think of that bold nigger.

Other tourists arrived, and we followed one another into the building.

We found ourselves in a kind of hall, oblong in shape, with a gallery all round. The spectators sat under the gallery, separated from the wide space in the middle by a low balustrade. Marie and I sat quite close to this, on wooden stools with no backs. I don't know what became of the Germans; I think they were too nervous to sit as near the dervishes as we did and were somewhere in the crowd behind.

At one end of the open space was an alcove where the chief dervish sat. It was decorated with objects that looked like weapons and had a Turkish or Arabic text above it; on either side hung linen with writing on it.

On the floor were a number of sheepskin mats; many worshippers entered and squatted on these, or prostrated themselves.

There was an old gentleman with a white beard near us; as the service proceeded he was so overcome with emotion that he fell to sobbing and weeping. The tears rolled down his cheeks, and he dried them with a large handkerchief of Manchester cotton with a cheerful design of birds on the border.

The howling dervishes themselves stood in a line opposite the alcove where the chief dervish squatted. He looked serene and dignified under his green turban.

There were two attendants or servitors. One wore a long white scarf with fringed ends which he repeatedly kissed, the other wore a black scarf, The latter had also the most unpleasant expression I have seen on any countenance: he looked so absolutely contemptuous as he went about his duties. He brought a small gold cup, which

he filled with incense and lighted. He placed it first near the alcove, then moved it to the centre ; always with the same punctilious manner, the same sardonic smile.

After the litany which began the service was over, the howling began and anything more appalling I have never heard. The dervishes swayed and curtsied, curtsied and swayed, and as they moved they howled and roared. Backwards and forwards, to this side and that, and their voices rose and fell, sometimes so loud was the noise that you felt the roof must go, sometimes it died away almost to a murmur; but there was no cessation. The men grew hotter and hotter, the sweat poured from them, their eyes rolled, they cast off one garment after another.

Finally a nigger, nearly seven feet high, who had been singing on one of the mats a song of his own and one quite different from the dervishes', joined the swaying line, and, after one or two preliminary howls, ran backwards and forwards on his hands and knees, bellowing like a bull.

The whole ceremony lasted two hours; at last, when the exhausted dervishes fell one by

one and lay in sobbing heaps, I made my way thankfully into the open air. It was the most nerve-racking performance I have ever witnessed. Marie stayed to see the final act: she likes to see everything there is to see and to hear everything there is to hear.

Little children lay face downwards on the ground while the chief dervish walked on their backs. This curious performance is supposed to prevent or cure bad complaints. Marie said he did not seem to hurt the children at all.

On the way home we discussed the strange idea that such a disgusting exhibition should be considered pleasing to the Almighty. Now its religious significance is spoilt by the money the worshippers make through the tourist spectators, but it was originally a service pure and simple.

I think the German ladies were much relieved to find themselves safe in the Home again; they spent a profitable evening of accounts. Marie and I popped some more *mejidiehs* into our money-bag and agreed we had had a lovely day. Don't you think so, too?

The memory of that wistaria with its mauve

blossoms and gold-green leaves will remain with me for ever. I wish you could see it.

Tell the rector about the service I have been to, it may interest him.

Yours as ever,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER XXIII

Constantinople.

My dear Edmund,

Read Gibbon, read "Harmsworth's History of the World"—in 50 parts—read anything you like, but don't ask me for history. I should probably give it wrong, with dates mixed up so that a Stubbs could not unravel them! I write you what I see and hear and that must content you. If a few crumbs of history fall to your lot, you may read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them; but on no account must you emulate Oliver Twist and ask for more!

"So now you know," as the song says, and I will continue my veracious account of our doings.

Our guide, Moïse, arrived at 10 o'clock this morning.

Moïse is a very superior person to Achille; he wears a fez, for one thing, instead of a seedy Homburg hat, and has a handsome olive-coloured face instead of a pock-marked countenance of

oatmeal! He is a Jew by descent, he tells us, is a Greek in religion—and a tremendous talker. He and Marie have long confabulations as they walk along together; he recounts marvellous stories, more or less true, about the harems. I walk a little bit behind and see more than Marie does, so busy is she with Moïse's histories. She is unconquerably curious as to what goes on behind the curtain.

Moïse brought a carriage and pair with him, a victoria, and after a little bargaining agreed to take us for eight francs for the day's excursion. This sum of course included the carriage. We got in, Moïse mounted the box, the driver cracked his whip, and away we went bumping over the uneven road.

It was the day of *selamlik*, and we were going to see Abdul Hamid pass on his way to the mosque where he worships every Friday. We drove into a kind of enclosed place, bare even of grass, and put ourselves in a line with other carriages. No kodaks are allowed, and Moïse told us detectives were walking up and down between the lines of carriages. We were well placed, opposite the road down which the Sultan would drive, and while we waited Moïse recounted thrilling

stories of the cruelty of the Sultan. One, I remember: he said the Sultan walked down a path made of the ears and noses of the Kurds his troops had slain!

We were close to the mosque, so we could see the priest as he came out on the minaret balcony and chanted the midday prayer; to our left was a beautiful view of the sea.

We watched the troops arrive, and a guard of sailors with red round their collars and tiny anchors embroidered at the corners. There were soldiers in blue tunics and overalls; zouaves in blue, green and mauve, a most effective uniform; cavalry, on grey horses, wearing green tunics and bearing long sabres and carbines, all well-mounted, the officers especially so; more cavalry on brown horses and wearing red-breasted tunics; and artillery in blue-grey overalls with broad red stripes.

When the *imam* came out, and chanted the prayer in his tremendous voice, he was answered by the bands and deep-throated "Amens" from the waiting soldiers.

The effect was dramatic, and the hundreds of crimson fezes made brilliant colour.

The Sultan drove in a victoria; I saw him

from the box of the carriage. He is exactly like his pictures: a big-nosed man with a beard, who sat as if he was stuffed. On either side of his carriage ran short red-faced Pachas in blue and gold uniforms with epaulets. Moïse told us that whoever kept nearest his Majesty was supposed to be most faithful to him; the ordinary person might imagine it to be a case of youth and figure. Some of the old fellows looked very warm and unhappy in their efforts to prove their loyalty.

I saw the Sultan get out and mount the steps of the mosque, so I know he was a live person, even if some one was representing him, which, *on dit*, is sometimes the case.

We did not wait for the end of the service, or whatever it was, but drove down by a lower road close to the sea. We passed the Arsenal; on our left was a huge yellow wall full of pigeon-holes, with blue pigeons flying in and out of them; we passed, too, many gardens full of fruit-trees covered with blossom. These were surrounded by high walls, so I hope the women living near were able to enjoy their beauty. The sight of the seraglio fills me with awe. To think that there are more than a thousand women

shut up in it. Moïse told Marie some stories connected with it, which were not repeated to me!

We left our carriage at the Bridge, and with our guide crossed over to Stamboul.

We went to lunch at a restaurant, a superior place to the one we visited the other day, where we had a delicious meal: mutton cutlets with fried potatoes, the puffy kind that crackle when you bite them, *riz au lait* and *compote* of peaches. Moïse had to content himself with oil and beans, as it was the Greek Good Friday. He was much amused at the way I enjoyed my lunch, especially the peaches and rice, which were as cold as if they were iced, and regarded me at intervals during the afternoon, saying, "Mais Mademoiselle a très bien mangé." Mademoiselle felt all the better for her lunch; the sight of Abdul Hamid is enough to make anyone hungry!

After lunch we went first to the Cistern Basilica. It is a huge place underground with three hundred and eighteen pillars each way; it was built during the Byzantine Empire and is still in use. It is mysteriously beautiful, the pillars rise out of the placid water and made strange shadows in it when Moïse waved blazing torches to illumine it for us.

The entrance is in a private yard. A girl came coyly down an outer staircase with a bunch of keys; she gave them to Moïse, her head carefully turned from him, though I wager she managed to see him. It is one of the few advantages that women have over men that they can see with the back of their heads! Moïse objected to the price named, I think it was two francs a head, and was told that if one lady was the lady-in-waiting to a personage she could go in free. Marie seized my umbrella in a twinkling, removed her gold bangle, addressed me as "La Princesse" and told me to look as noble as I could. So, for the first and only time in my life, I represented royalty, with the noble purpose of defrauding an alien government. My *dear* Edmund, can you remain the friend of such a depraved person?

We bowed ourselves away. Once outside I dropped my regal air and resumed my umbrella.

Moïse, of course talking volubly, next conducted us to the Hippodrome.

There is little left of its ancient glory, it is used by the Turks as an exercise ground for horses. The Forum adjoins it, and here, lying neglected on the ground, is the ancient serpentine

column, which Gibbon says once supported the golden tripod that in the time of Xerxes was consecrated in the temple of Delphi by the Victorious Greeks. Also the "burnt pillar," which is all that remains of the beautiful column that supported the statue of Apollo said to have been sculptured by Phidias. As the rector would say, "How are the mighty fallen!"

We went into the Hall of the Janissaries, which contains groups of wax figures dressed in the costumes which were formerly worn at court. Some of the groups were interesting and the immense size of some of the turbans imposing; I am sure the palace doors must have been enlarged to let the wearer through. The Royal Executioner was an awe-inspiring figure.

Again in the open air, we peeped down an opening in the ground into the cistern of the thousand columns. This cistern used also to be open to the public, but has been closed since a bomb was discovered in it. We could just see the shadowy pillars and the curious effect of the grey light that faintly illuminated the place in parts.

We went next to the Mosque of the Pigeons. We entered the courtyard, and at the command of Moïse we bought a pot of grain and flung it

on the stones. Immediately there was a rush of wings, the sky seemed darkened and hundreds of blue birds came fluttering down. The maize was gone in a moment and we bought some more, but only a tenth of the number can possibly have got one grain!

We were getting a little tired by now, so went into the Bazaar for some shopping, which is much more amusing than in England. We went into one of the tiny dark curio shops and seated ourselves near the counter. We were offered tea or coffee. I chose tea, Marie coffee; the tea was very hot and served in a glass with lemon *à la russe*. Then various goods were produced. We pretended to scorn them, to be aghast at the price—Marie was very good at this—and finally we bought a few things at a reasonable price. I have bought you something which looks like a kind of weapon, but which I am assured is an inkstand.

I hope you are collecting some nice things to be ready for me when I return?

With this greedy question,

I remain

Yours as ever,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER XXIV

Constantinople.

MY DEAR EDMUND,

No abuse, please! I cannot see you yet, it is too soon; stay at Talwood and do your duty to your neighbour. I shall have to stop writing to you if you won't treat me as I ask, and if my letters are really the pleasure to you that you say they are I should be sorry to do that.

You will be surprised to hear that I have been to a Prayer Meeting. Prayer Meetings and Constantinople don't seem to agree, yet the Mohammedans hold lots of them, though they call them by a different name. I was bribed to go by the promise of a good tea and the sight of two beautiful cats. I went with Miss Dering, the permanent paying guest here. She has a sad history. Her father was a captain in the merchant service and was for some time captain of the Sultan's yacht. He retired and asked for his promised pension; it was given to some one else! The old gentleman, not unnaturally,

objected to this arrangement and made rather a fuss about it. One day he disappeared. His family searched high and low, they went to the British consul, everything was done that could be done, though, as his daughter rather bitterly said, they would not make an international affair of the disappearance of an old sea-captain. Finally, after some weeks, his body was washed up in a sack with the hands tied behind. He was probably killed by the person who was in receipt of the old man's pension.

Well, it was a very nice Prayer Meeting. Similar meetings are held every week or so by an English lady here, who gathers the stray young Englishwomen round her, and tries to counteract some of the evil influences that surround them. Marie is very much struck by the way the English help each other in foreign places; she says she wishes her Ministers and people would show a little more interest in their countrywomen.

The tea was excellent, the cats magnificent, great grey Persians with their fur sweeping the ground, and as gentle as they were pretty. Their owner has to take great care of them to prevent their being stolen or hurt by the street

dogs. Earlier in the day, Miss Dering took us to the English shop, Macgills, then across the Bridge to see rahat lakoum made. Two enormous Turks presided over immense brass bowls in which the sweetmeat was boiling. It is made chiefly of honey, with different flavourings, and is very delicious. The whole place was spotlessly clean, as were the clothes of the portly cooks. I bought some boxes of the luscious stuff, but I am afraid it won't last long enough for me to bring you any!

On Sunday, Marie, who is a Roman Catholic, went to Mass at the French Embassy Chapel, and I went to the English Crimean Memorial Church with Miss Dering. We walked down a most Oriental street with tall houses on either side painted different colours, clothes fluttering on the roofs, children and dogs mixed up in the gutter. We turned a corner, and came upon a little grey stone church that might have been brought bodily from an English village and put down in these Eastern surroundings; the same peace seemed to brood over it. However, to-day that peace was somewhat impaired, as it is the Greek Easter and the Greek inhabitants have been letting off harmless bombs all day. The effect

inside the church was as if it were in a state of siege.

There was a splendid religious procession through the streets; the Orthodox priests wear gorgeous vestments.

The Greek Cathedral is a fine building, at the end of the Grande Rue Pera, and is built to resemble St. Sophia. It is of grey marble, and the screen is very handsome with numbers of pictures set in the marble and gilding. In the centre of the church is a figure of Christ at the Resurrection.

Do you know that here all the doors and shutters are of iron and the lower windows strongly barred? There is, too, a watchman, who goes round every night and taps out the hour with a stick. He makes such a noise, at first we could not imagine what it was.

The German ladies have returned to Bukarest, where perhaps we shall meet again. Marie and the elder one were very amusing together: one with her quick French wit, the other with her Teutonic thoroughness and desire to get to the bottom of everything. They were polite to each other, but not friendly—Alsace-Lorraine stood between them.

I do not wonder stay-at-home English get so insular. You must travel, Edmund, to enlarge your views, which are inclined to the parochial. The short time I have been here I have met two German ladies, one Russian, four English of quite different types, a Belgian, and an elderly Frenchwoman who teaches her own language. She is a great ally of one of the best confectioners here, and she refuses to put a foot on board ship; she prefers, she says "*le plancher des vaches*," a delightful idiom for terra firma. She is the lady who converses so animatedly with Marie on the landings; and has presented her with an excellent recipe for a cake.

We get goats'-milk cheese here, packed up in a fascinating way with green rushes. It tastes good, but I wonder how many bacteria it holds.

I have had one or two post cards from the Goldschmidts, who will be home again in three or four days, so my delightful holiday is coming to an end. We have two more excursions in view, which I will write about in my next letter. You had better address *your* next to Bukarest.

Don't be vexed with me any longer. A woman must choose her life as she thinks best; cannot

you see it is better for me to carry out my original plans? Leave me alone, dear, except for letters, which I cannot do without.

Yours as ever,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER XXV

Constantinople.

My dear Edmund,

Our two excursions have come off successfully and I write to tell you of them to-night, though I am rather sleepy. To-morrow we go back to Bukarest, and our pleasant holiday will be over.

I like the out-of-door excursions so much the best: I like to find out what flowers grow, what birds live in these strange places, and to see the people living their everyday lives. Marie has found this out, and, like the dear she is, arranged two delightful trips to finish our time together.

There is a hill behind Scutari that I call Bullboroo. It isn't its name, but is something like it, and I have wanted to climb it.

So with the ease of old stagers, we took our tickets once more for Scutari, and the steamer took us swiftly there; we were favoured with our usual fine weather.

Arrived at the wharf, we announced distinctly that we wished a carriage to take us to Mount Bullboroo. Immediately we were surrounded by animated Jehus, all talking at once. Marie held up a four-franc piece. Before we realized what we were doing, we were seated in a victoria and were being driven along a bumpy road. It was so bumpy, and the springs of the carriage so poor, that we were shot up and down, and had to hold on to each other to keep ourselves from being precipitated on to the side of the road. We were overtaken by another carriage, which drove alongside of us for a few moments; the occupants were much amused at our efforts to preserve our equilibrium and our gravity as we bounded this way and that on the slippery seat.

The two vehicles reached the hill about the same time; we dismounted at a pretty spot where some big trees were growing, and joined forces to walk to the top, which was not many yards away. The strangers were an Italian lady and gentleman with, oddly enough, an Austrian guide. The gentleman was the captain of the Italian man-of-war stationed at Constantinople, and a most agreeable man. He was leaving

shortly, so he and his wife were doing all the sights.

That morning they had been in the Bazaar buying carpets, and asked me if I had bought any, to which I modestly replied, "Not yet!" Then they said how cheap they were.

We all talked French; Marie rudely said she had never heard so many funny accents together: Italian, English, Austrian! She said the English was the prettiest; this may, however, have been only French politeness, or perhaps her affection for me!

It was delightful walking over the short grass, which was full of sweet-smelling thyme. As usual, I hunted for flowers, and found the same as at Yédi Koulé and some big dog violets besides —they looked so familiar—also a pretty pink pea blossom. I thought, too, I saw gorse bushes, but, as they were not in flower and a little way off, I am not sure. Do they grow anywhere besides the British Isles?

We had a magnificent view from the top of Bullboroo. To the north, the narrow Bosporus stretching away to the Black Sea, its banks lined with white palaces and grey forts embowered in tender green foliage; to the south, the blue

Sea of Marmora with the Iles des Princes in the foreground, and a faint outline of hills in the distance. The Iles des Princes were swathed in a golden haze and the mountains looked almost mauve. To the east, the grey hills and plains of Anatolia stretched far away, bearing a strange resemblance to the Peak County of Derbyshire, except for the snow peaks that reached skywards here and there; and, to the west, Constantinople on its seven hills shimmered in the afternoon sunshine.

We ordered a meal, such as we could get: tea, bread and cheese, one very new and the other very old, and rahat lakoum. We munched and sipped between our exclamations of delight.

Two Turkish gentlemen arrived very hot after their climb. They sat down on two chairs and put their feet on two more. They ordered coffee and *narghile* pipes and sat and smoked and gazed at the panorama spread before them.

As we wended our way down the hill, we heard a lark, and saw a long-legged grey bird and some swallows.

The Austrian guide took a great fancy to Marie, and gave her many instructions as to what she should see and how she should see it. So obeying

his instructions, we started yesterday afternoon in the steamer for Eyoub, on our way to the Sweet Waters of Europe.

Arrived at Eyoub—you remember the place where I saw the storks—we walked to the end of the wharf and shouted "Reshab!" at intervals for about five minutes.

At last a man who was asleep in a boat near us woke up and looked dreamily round. "Reshab! Reshab!" we shouted.

He rolled out and came up to us, and bowed, showing his white teeth in an affable smile. He was Reshab; what could he do for us?"

We explained we wished to visit the Sweet Waters. He hauled out his boat and handed us into it; he sculled and Marie steered. After a few moments' conversation it appeared that Reshab was a Rumanian, and he and Marie had some conversation in that delectable tongue.

He rowed for about three-quarters of an hour; the water narrowed till we came into a river with low banks on either side, with trees and wide fields full of buttercups and an unknown mauve flower; and presently we came near a bridge close to which was a mosque and the usual

graceful minaret. Just as we arrived the *imam* came out and sang the 4 o'clock prayer.

There were plenty of other boats, and when we wished to pass them Reshab shouted out the name of the kind of boat it was, such as caïque, bark, etc., and it moved out of our way. I thought it rather complicated and difficult for those unlearned in the build of boats!

We landed just before the bridge, and had some bread and tomatoes under one of the little shelters which dotted the banks. They were made of wood and laurestinus leaves, and many picnic parties were amusing themselves under them. These were chiefly made up of men. Some of them had taken off their boots and were eating oranges and salad. Women crouched near them; they had brown faces and white teeth and wore spotted muslin veils flowing round them; they sang lustily in the indescribable Turkish way. There was curious music, one man played on a long pipe while another banged on two little drums.

There were innumerable carriages, very dusty after the drive from Constantinople, and men on horseback or cycles. The sun shone brightly,

and it was all very charming and unlike anything I had seen before.

The shadows were lengthening when at last we tore ourselves away from the Sweet Waters and shouted for Reshab, who was again asleep in the boat. He woke with a smile—he was a fascinating person—and, still smiling, he handed us into the boat and rowed us back to Eyoub. The freshening wind whipped the quiet water into tiny waves, which the setting sun turned to gold.

Sorrowfully we landed at the Bridge, and sorrowfully we mounted the steep hill up to the Rue Iskender, wishing that our holiday was beginning instead of ending. Yet, we said to one another, we shall always have the memory of it, a happy memory that we shall share and with which no one else, however beloved, can interfere.

To-morrow we shall be once more in Bukarest, each to take up her duties again, and perhaps I shall find waiting there a letter for

Yours as always,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER XXVI

Bukarest.

My dear Edmund,

No, I do not think you would look fetching with a red rose over the left ear and white pyjamas with embroidered ends, as you call them. You might try, but I doubt the success of the experiment, you are not the build for a fancy costume. Not that I object to your inches, far from it. You *would* look massive among the men here!

I think a Turkish costume would be more becoming. How about one that I saw worn by a stout gentleman in the Grande Rue Pera? It was of deep crimson, richly embroidered, made with a zouave jacket and very, *very* baggy trousers divided just at the ankles.

We reached home without adventure. The sea was so smooth that neither of us was ill, and we decided that the Black Sea was not so black as we had painted it.

Mella was very pleased to see her Nanna

again and to show her a new pink frock she has been given. The rest of the family welcomed me most kindly.

I cannot make out Mademoiselle Duval, and think something must have passed between her and her employers which I have not been told. She alternately quarrels with Madame Goldschmidt, or weeps floods of tears on my shoulder. They are such very wet tears, my blouse gets saturated and sticks to my skin, it is uncomfortable, and I don't like it. Why this thusness I can't tell you.

We had an interesting day on May 10th—Old Style. You remember, perhaps, I told you that Moldavia and Wallachia used to be quite separate; they were united in December, 1861, when their union was proclaimed at Bukarest and Jassi. Prince Couza was first elected ruler of the joint provinces, but was obliged to abdicate when he had reigned for a very short period. Prince Carl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen was elected Prince, or Hospodar, by plebescite, and enthusiastically welcomed to Bukarest, May, 1866. It is this occasion we are honouring to-day.

The Prince and Princess were not crowned King and Queen until 1881.

We went out in the morning, Clara, Oscar and Irma, with me to chaperon them. There was a large crowd in the streets; we made our way with some difficulty to the Orenbergs, who live in a house at the corner where the Boulevard Carol crosses the Calea Victoriei. As the review takes place in the boulevard opposite the University near the statue of King Mihail, and the King's palace is a little further up the Calea Victoriei, you can understand we were in an excellent position. Our windows were rather high up and gave us a bird's-eye view of everything. The boots of the spectators projecting over the kerb after the roadway was cleared had such a funny effect.

Our hosts were two agreeable well-educated young men who have a jeweller's shop, one of the best in the city. They live in a charming flat and were courtesy itself. They had other friends there, and provided us with a tempting repast of *petits fours*, sandwiches and wine.

I was introduced as "Miss." Very few foreigners realize that we do not address our equals as "Miss," though I believe the English habit of saying Mademoiselle, Fräulein, etc., is equally incorrect; I suppose it comes from

an inability to pronounce each other's proper names. However that may be, let us return to the 10th of May. The Royalties go first to the Cathedral; we saw them drive by; the pretty Crown Princess, all in white, drove with her husband and children.

The King and Queen drove by, escorted by the King's Guard; it is a fine regiment, well mounted and the men have peculiarly effective saddle-cloths of black and scarlet. The King, as I have already told you, is not outwardly impressive except for his broad forehead.

Carmen Sylva's appearance is disappointing: her early portraits and the charm of her writing make one expect something particularly attractive. It may be that she is so to meet; seen from a street window she looks like a plump German *Frau* with a red face and spectacles. I must confess it was a warm day and she did not put up a sunshade. She was draped in white. I am told she has bright blue eyes and a charming manner, but have had no opportunity of judging her myself.

However, in this democratic place it is quite easy to get to a Court Ball; indeed, Dr. Goldschmidt offered to get me an invitation for one

if I cared to go. I was rather tempted, but thought it foolish to spend my money on a suitable garment.

The King and Prince Ferdinand wore uniform. The latter has rather a sulky look and not ingratiating manners, but I have been told he is more popular in his household than his lovely Princess. While the Royalties were at the service nothing interesting took place, so we filled up the pause with refreshments and kindly efforts on the part of our hosts to talk French with me.

When the Royalties returned from the Cathedral the Queen and Princess drove together; the latter had a pair of doves on her lap.

The King and Prince rode back and turning up the Boulevard took up their position near the spirited statue of King Mihail. Then the troops marched by, rather badly I thought some of them, to the music of the regimental bands.

The soldiers of one regiment wear turkey feathers in their caps, or whatever they wear on their heads; this is in memory of the victory over the Turks at Plevna, when they helped their big neighbour Russia. The cavalry are well mounted and ride well. The artillery look workman-like, the guns are drawn by fine horses

with brown harness. I noticed a mountain battery with mules.

The populace appeared interested more than enthusiastic. It cannot be inspiring to have foreign Royalties who are unassociated with your country's traditions.

Rumanians are proud, and rightly, of their Army, though it must be a great expense to them, and I suppose hardly big enough to protect them against a great Power.

We were home again about 2 o'clock. In the evening Mademoiselle Duval took the young people out to see the illuminations; I stayed with Mella. I spent the time either with her or, when she slept, with Dr. and Madame Goldschmidt in the *salon.*

I played duets with the former and he complimented me on my reading of music; this was kind of him considering I ended "Anitra's Dance" with the wrong chord!

The weather is becoming daily warmer, and I am sorry for those who have to stay in Bukarest all the summer months; the heat is stifling, such as we rarely get in our wind-blown isles.

I never imagined, when I grumbled at the wind at home, how much I should miss it when

I came to live in an inland town like this; six hours by train to the nearest seaport, more than three to the mountains. Sometimes I think I should welcome a gale, though I did not appreciate the Russian wind when I had it!

It is almost too hot for our pleasant walks. I generally take Mella to the gardens about 9 a.m. and we sit under the trees till lunch-time She rides in state in her mail-cart with a canopy over it; we take some biscuits or buy our favourite rings of millet bread.

We are getting well known to the odd people who live in the wooden huts on the plain round the barracks of the *pompiers*. Sometimes the ladies who sit on the steps, in their lace gowns with their bare feet in the dust, call out remarks to us as we go by. I am sure they are pleasant ones; anyway, we can't understand them, so there is no harm done to anyone.

The person who really is a nuisance is a photographer who always rushes out of his den and wants to take us for the enormous price of half a franc. He is so insistent that if an awful picture on tin arrives of a gorilla-like female and a baby in a mail-cart do not be frightened, it will be only Mella and me.

Our friend the sentry has even more to interest him now than the sight of his comrades feeding. There are several caravans of wax-works drawn up opposite his box; they have highly interesting and remarkable pictures outside of the wax-works to be seen in the interior.

Sometimes a dark and fascinating damsel with ringlets appears on the top of the steps; she dances on that limited platform to beat of drum. The sentry's eyes grow round with delight.

We have lots of roses out in the garden; the acacia smells almost too sweet. How have the Talwood roses done this year?

Are you going to give the usual garden party and cricket match or do you shirk the trouble entailed?

By the way, how are the ladies at The Hollies? I saw a paragraph in one of the Society papers about Mr. Talbot of Talwood, so well known in hunting circles, etc. etc., which interested me much.

You know I wish you well now and always.

Yours,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER XXVII

Bukarest.

My good Edmund,

Here's a how de do! Exposing myself to the impertinences of wicked females, flirting with handsome jewellers, reading vile halfpenny papers! Keep your temper, though it is a bad one, my friend, or you will cease to get news from your foreign correspondent. The females may be impertinent, I shall certainly not give up my pleasant mornings in the gardens on their account, particularly as I do not understand their remarks, neither shall I go the other way: in this broiling sun we make our walks as short as possible. I did not flirt with the jeweller, as it happens, I do not know French well enough to do so, though why I shouldn't if I chose and am not on duty I don't quite see; there is no one who can say me nay.

The paragraph I read was in "The Universe," a publication you greatly affect; pray write to the editor and abuse him.

We will consider the incident closed; I will now condescend to tell you of King Mihail, of whom you in your insular ignorance have never heard. The next time you go to town go to the British Museum and look him up!

Mihail lived at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries, he was therefore the contemporary of Queen Bess and King Jamie. He was called the Bold or the Brave. I can't quite make out which, but I suppose they mean much the same thing.

He was one of the first rulers of Wallachia.

The ruling king was jealous of him, as Saul was of David, he caused Mihail to be taken prisoner and commanded his execution. As Mihail was being led out to death, the executioner discovered that his life had been saved by the prisoner and refused to touch him. Mihail was liberated and afterwards became King himself. There are some remains of his palace on the banks of the Dambovitza, and a military school is called after him. He is the National Hero.

This is the story Irma told me; I cannot vouch for the truth of it. Here is another.

Mihail was the son of the Voivade Petrascu and in his youth carried on an extensive commercial business; through his wife Stanca he was related to many of the "best" families, and to belong to the "best" families seems to have been as useful then as in these snobbish days.

Mihail revolted against the ruling Voivade and in time managed to make himself ruler in 1593. He was a great soldier, and gained many victories over the Turks and Tartars, one of his most famous was at Kalugareni in August, 1595.

He formed various alliances to further his own ambitions, which were many, and in May, 1600, invaded Moldavia. It is thought he wanted to make himself King there also, but his nobles were enraged by the way he had impoverished his principality to pay for his military enterprises, and revolted against him. After many defeats he was murdered by the Austrian general, George Basta, on account of a piece of suggested treachery.

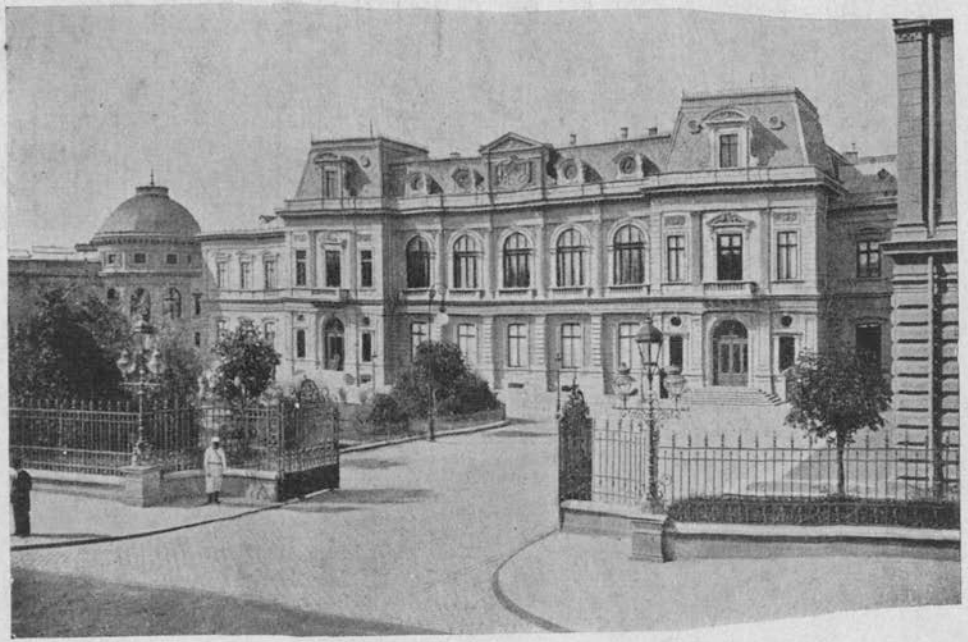
The deed was done at Thorda, August 19th, 1601. There is a spirited equestrian statue of King Mihail in front of the University; it shows

a fine virile countenance with a hooked nose and close-cut beard.

We shall be going to Sinaia shortly, I cannot tell you exactly when, though the day is fixed it does not follow that we go on it. We are longing for the cool mountain air, and talk greedily of the wood strawberries which we buy in wooden jugs from the peasants.

Dr. and Madame Goldschmidt went into the country yesterday; they say the corn is shoulder high and ripening fast, the roses magnificent. The soil is so rich in this great plain that no manure is necessary. Here the catalpas are still in flower, they bloom rather later than the acacias, whose blossoms are dropping and drying on the ground; they smell sweeter than ever, a most penetrating scent.

We have all our meals in the garden except lunch, and our balcony is too hot to sit on except at night. Mademoiselle and I sit out there under the stars in our red wicker chairs, except when I have to sing hymns to Mella to send her to sleep. I also tell her one story each night, and I could not make out why she always asked for the same one night after night. I asked her



ROYAL PALACE, BUKAREST

at last. "'Cause it's the longest," the cute little thing replied.

Yesterday, when on my balcony, I saw a gipsy passing by, she was walking with a man and had a little child by the hand. She was dressed in two highly decorated aprons worn back and front over buff-coloured pantaloons; as she wore no petticoat, her appearance was decidedly curious. We see many quaint people in the streets; still I expect they think me odder than I do them, and I am certainly not so picturesque. Some soldiers passed down our road, too, just as the sun was setting, they marched with swords drawn to the loud tootlings of a trumpet. Mademoiselle nodded and waved to them, they answered with hand-kissings and shouted remarks which seemed to please her. They wore shakos with high red tufts, dark coats faced with red, white trousers embroidered in the same colour, and white boots; they looked like stage soldiers.

Talking of soldiers, Mella and I like watching the guard changed at the Palace; they don't do it very well, and I am always shocked at the way the officer in charge looks around and salutes his friends. Mella likes best to stand on the low

wall and look through the railings, but the police won't allow her to do it.

Now I come to think of it, I wonder we have not been run in by the police before now, they seem to object to our doing such innocent things.

We are jogging along in the usual way *à la maison*. The older children are immersed in exams.; poor Irma has a heated countenance; Oscar wears a worried look. The summer exams. seem very important; Irma, at any rate, has not yet passed those insisted on by the Government.

Mademoiselle screams after them. She writes perpetually in her diary, and receives letters from Vienna. I have an idea she meets some one when she walks abroad, ostensibly to change one foolish novel for another. Monsieur Alcalay appears of little account.

You ask me about the people here. It is difficult, almost impossible, to understand the "soul of a people" in so short a time, so any observations I make must be superficial.

The Goldschmidts are, as I have said, Jews, and in the present state of society associate only with Jews. You can tell for yourself from my

account of our lives here what sort of people they are, though I do not know if I have made it clear that they think a great deal about appearances and what other people "will say."

Rumanians strike me as gay, lazy and rather immoral. Divorce is extremely common; indeed, no one seems to think anything of it. I have been told of girls who marry on purpose to be divorced, so that they can enjoy the free position of widow! Young girls are always most carefully chaperoned. I remember one day Dr. Goldschmidt was most indignant with Regina because she left Clara to walk about twenty yards alone. All religious sects are tolerated; indeed, tolerance is the leading characteristic of Rumanians, some say it degenerates into laxity.

The upper classes are agnostic, but like most people have their *dévots*, and certainly amongst the Jews philanthropy is practised. The peasants are very superstitious and have a great belief in the saints, especially St. Dimitri, whose bones rest in the cathedral on the hill.

There is a greater gulf between gentleman and peasant than in any other country I have been in, there seems no sympathy between them.

The educated classes are chiefly lawyers and politicians, particularly politicians; they are clever and prosper materially under the present Government.

I have never heard the women's suffrage question mentioned.

You must remember too that Bukarest is half oriental, and in the blood of the people runs a curious mixture of races.

A people who have Greek culture, French taste and choose a German Royalty seem to me most curious, but that may be due to my want of historical knowledge and the psychology of peoples.

The country suffers much from absentee landlordism, as the owners of the great estates draw as much money as they can from their properties and put nothing in.

I am told the dry hot weather we are having is very bad for the rape seed, which wants rain at this time. The rape harvest is one thing the peasants make money by, and if it fails the country loses thousands of francs. Does this interest you, Mr. Farmer?

The big bell is ringing, its deep tones sound well in the stillness of evening, but it is disturbing

Mella, so I must go. Your last letter was short and by no means sweet. Write a really nice one next time to

Your old comrade,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER XXVIII

Sinaia.

My dear Edmund,

Here we are in Sinaia once again—in a much prettier villa than we were in last year. We enter a gate out of the Strada Isvor and wander beside a little stream bordered with bright flowers; we arrive at The Châlet, which has a tower with a conical roof and dear little balconies, just where balconies should be, i.e. where you don't expect them! If we go out of the back door we climb a hill-side to a big row of hazel-trees, with nuts ripening on them, which form a kind of outpost to the forest.

The air feels deliciously fresh after the heat of Bukarest, Mella is getting rosy again and her Nanna quite fat. Irma and I have enormous appetites; we eat such a lot of the excellent bread and butter, and even have rashers of bacon with early coffee sometimes. We have our meals outside, as usual, when the weather permits,

but it is not very reliable so high in the mountains.

The four young people are here and Madame Goldschmidt, but no Mademoiselle Duval; after a stormy week that lady has retired to her relations in Paris.

I was wrong, it seems, about Monsieur Alcalay; it *was* he she used to meet when she went out to change her library book. She always made an elaborate toilette before setting out, and never failed to come to me to be admired.

She did look very well sometimes. Her clothes put on with French daintiness, her fair hair shining, her green eyes full of *malice*. She says she is only just over twenty, but she has the mature look of a woman near thirty.

One day she was seen by Regina down by the little cottage with the acacias which I have mentioned before, near the green where the shepherds rest with their brown sheep and Mella loves to pick flowers. She left the cottage with Monsieur Alcalay.

Now, do you remember a German lady I told you about who banged her employer over the head with an umbrella and was engaged to a Rumanian younger than herself? Well, the

fiancé was Alcalay! Madame—she is a widow —saw him with Mademoiselle, followed them home to Strada Sapienței, and encountered the pair in the garden where they were taking an innocent stroll one moonlit evening. You can imagine the scene between the two women. Mella was wakened from her first sleep by the noise they made, and so frightened by it that she howled lustily. Irma was in fits of laughter as she and I watched the scene from the balcony. I have since heard that the German lady has broken off her engagement; and the secretary goes about looking rather blue—she had large savings.

Then it came out, somehow, as these things always do come out, that Mademoiselle's other flirtation was with, oh, horror! a married man with a family! I hope the diary has been burnt.

There were more scenes, weepings on my shoulder, talk about a poor girl having her character taken away and so forth. Finally, to every one's relief, she took her departure after sulking in her room two or three days, doing no work and abusing those who had really shown her great forbearance and kindness.

I received a long letter from her two or three

days afterwards. Her "boy" had met her at Vienna—his fortunate name, by the way, is Felix—and they had a charming lunch together, he had seen her off to Paris and given her violets.

So Mademoiselle Jeanne Duval departs from Bukarest and from my letters. She has amused and interested me much; I do not pretend to have really known her. I fancy she respected my English innocence, I always felt she was keeping something back, and the diary came as a surprise. Still, she was always pleasant in our relations with each other, whatever she may have said behind my back; I miss her shrill voice with the curious jargon of English, French and German to which she always treated me.

We have had no one to replace her. I do not know if the Goldschmidts intend doing so. Clara is nearly grown up and amenable, and I always look after Irma in vacation.

We lead the same life as during our stay here last year and which I described to you in former letters. We sit in the Park in the morning and listen to the band; I take work and talk to my acquaintances while Irma and Mella play with their friends.

Sometimes we go to the forest and watch the

Guard coming over the hill, admiring the swagger of the buglers as they pass down the shaded path. We hold our breath to hear the last faint notes as they get near the Pelesch, and enter the curious barracks where they live near the entrance to the Palace. These are built in imitation of ancient ruins and are quite out of keeping with the Palace.

The latter is built in the châlet style and is a witness to the genius of the builders and the determination of King Carol. Several times the waters of the Pelesch washed away the foundations, as often the King was advised to give up and build elsewhere. But he persisted, and there it is charmingly situated in the shadow of Caraiman, the hoary mountain beloved of Carmen Sylva and about which she weaves such charming romances. I hear the interior is well furnished, the bedrooms *à l'anglaise*, but I have not seen them for myself. People are allowed in the grounds and look familiarly in at the windows, and when the organ peals out tell each other eagerly that the Queen is playing. The ground is cleared for a few yards and there are grass and flower-beds, beyond them the forest and the merry stream that gives its name to the Palace

and sings everlastingly. We stopped to look into the open hall, which is decorated with weapons taken in battle, and which excited Irma almost to fear. I ventured to pick a flower from one of the flower-beds to take as a remembrance of the pretty place. Very sentimental you say and smile "superior." Perhaps so, but sentiment oils the wheels though love may make the world go round. But pray don't mix it with sentimentality, which is abominable.

The Crown Prince and Princess live in quite a small villa when they are in Sinaia, it is also close to the forest and has a pretty little garden. We often see the children, and we meet her both driving and riding; she always rides astride in the mountains and looks charmingly pretty. If Joan of Arc of pious memory looked anything like her, I don't wonder the army followed her.

I enclose you a piece of edelweiss from Ormul, one of the highest peaks. I did not pick it myself, needless to remark. Clara gave it to me, it was a piece of some that was given her by a peasant who had just been acting as guide to some young men. I hear the mountains are very impressive when you get amongst the great

peaks, and the silence appalling. Sometimes you see an eagle hovering with great wide wings. There is a lack of water, no lakes and the rivers few and narrow.

The poker-parties have been revived, and continue for hours. Doesn't it seem waste of time to sit in a hot room dealing out cards and losing money while the sun shines and the forest calls?

Amalia and Cookie are here again. The former looks smart and does her hair most elaborately. I take an interest in her, she is so handsome; there is something almost volcanic about her, she suggests smouldering fires and such like; I fear she is not what the early Victorians or the rectoress would call "nice"; she occasionally spends the night out and has to remain in bed all the next day to get rid of the effects! She has looked happier lately, ever since Mademoiselle left, now I come to think of it. I wonder if—no—speculation is useless and unprofitable, I will have none of it! Not even though your usual letter is overdue. I cannot believe that you are offended by anything I have written, no, surely? It must be delayed in the post, so I will keep mine open no longer. The

scribble enclosed is a letter from Mella to ask you to send her a picture of your dogs for her new album.

Yours, in spite of having no letters,
as ever,
MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER XXIX

Sinaia,

My dear Edmund,

Do you remember in one of my letters last year I told you that Mademoiselle Duval had been an excursion to the Pestera Monastery? I never thought that I should be able to go and see it myself. Madame Goldschmidt, who is ever thoughtful for my pleasure and well-being, gave me permission to join a party this year and I have had a most enjoyable time. I expect you will be getting tired of all these descriptions —perhaps that is why my letters remain so long unanswered?—but you will have to put up with them! When my mind is full of a subject I can write of nothing else; you demand frequent letters, the result is as you see!

Irma went to spent two days with her cousins at a neighbouring villa, Madame and Clara undertook the care of Mella, who looked flatteringly sad at parting for two days. A day is a lifetime to a child.

We were timed to start at 6 o'clock, and the peasants brought the horses at 5! I don't know why, unless a Rumanian must be unpunctual. My dear Edmund, you would not admire the mountain horses: they are small, thin and extremely ugly, but as sure-footed as Kentucky mules and equally wiry. Each is provided with a wooden saddle covered with an end of Rumanian carpet, which only slightly softens its extreme hardness. However, these instruments of torture are also provided with very elevated pommels, which are much appreciated by poor riders in dangerous places. I clung to mine with a thankful heart many a time! Of course the party kept the horses waiting, and even at 7 o'clock, when at last all were collected, there was another halt. They had forgotten a grill for the *carnale* or sausages, a *donitor* or pail for drawing water; a "genteel" lady demanded another shawl to try and soften her saddle.

At last we were *en route*, twenty horses the peasants said; the humans were sixteen men and girls and one or two married women, to do propriety I suppose.

It was very cold at that hour of the morning,

as it usually is so high in the mountains, and we were all silent and rather sleepy. The road, too, was anything but pretty, the horses moved stiffly and we were all silent, not to say solemn. But after Teghi was passed we entered a wood. It was a lovely day with a real Carpathian sky, clear and blue between the crossed branches, and we opened our sleepy eyes and began to admire. This woke us up, we became more lively, gay remarks were flung from one to another, our horses too kept us on the alert by their curious habit of always wishing to walk at the very edge of the precipice; one is perched high on the beast at the mercy of the least false step. But there is really nothing to fear; leave everything to your mount and you will be safe enough. At least, this is what I was told, and I obeyed my instructions to the letter.

When we left the forest we zigzagged up a mountain side, and it was pretty to look back and forward at the cavalcade as it wound up the steep path. The horses went very slowly and carefully, so it took us five hours to arrive at the first halting-place, le Virful cu dor. We saw few flowers, only short grass such as grows on most

hill-sides, and the woods were as silent as those around St. Anna.

Le Virful cu dor—"The Height of Longing" was the beautiful translation given me—is a large stony plateau of much ugliness, so I do not know who gave it its pretty name, but for sixteen hungry people it was full of charm.

The horses were quickly unharnessed and went off helter-skelter to find their own dinners. A table-cloth was spread on the grass, and "viands" unpacked. I helped the girls and we had much fun over it; Margot is a charming creature, with big eyes full of feeling. She is a relation of Clara's and one of the most attractive women I have met here. We unpacked ham, *salamis*, fowls, and enough hard-boiled eggs to feed a regiment. The peasants took the *donitor* and fetched the most delicious water from the stream below—a noisy stream dashing headlong over boulders, called in French a "*torrent.*" Then they collected dead branches and soon had a magnificent fire blazing close to us. The light from the flames played on their dark faces and soft-coloured clothes and the smoke rose up into the blue sky like incense.

When the embers were red-hot they roasted

cucuretz and made Turkish coffee, which reminded me of dear Constantinople. The men and a few of the women lighted cigarettes.

We were not allowed to linger; the order to mount was soon given, an order easy to give but not to obey. Horses are not always easy to catch. I recognized my animal and seized his bridle. He rolled a wicked eye at me and launched a well-directed kick which sent me rolling several paces on the grass. Fortunately I was not hurt, but, I acknowledge, was astonished at being left to the tender mercies of a peasant while the men nearest me sat firmly in their saddles and smiled at my mishap; not so am I accustomed to be treated "at Home."

My especial peasant rushed up and soon had me once more on the back of the culprit. He called him Mursuk, the monster. I don't know whether he used the word as an opprobrious epithet or whether it was the poor lean creature's name.

I soon forgave Mursuk, however. The road grew so narrow and rough with loose stones and a deep precipice to the left, which made one almost giddy to look down. Mursuk walked delicately, trying the ground with each foot

before he leant his weight upon it; when the difficult place was passed he regained his usual apathy; not unlike many Englishmen who never seem awake unless they are in what we euphemistically call "a hole."

Soon we left the narrow path and came to a pretty plain, which we crossed at a trot. Mursuk was rather slow at changing his pace, so I was in the rear and had a full view of the party; as no one rises to the trot the effect was very funny, especially in the case of the shorter ladies. Suddenly the horses stopped short. A spring gushed from a rock and had hollowed out a little lake, which the horses knew well and they went down to water. They bent to drink without warning; there was a shriek, one lady found herself on the neck of her steed! She managed to scramble back to her saddle amid much chaff; she had refused to ride on a clumsy wooden saddle, but demanded an English one, as she wished to be chic. However, the wooden one with its handy pommel is more suitable for riding astride up the mountains.

We leant well back in our saddles as the path went sharply down. The road grew arid, nothing but sand and rocks that took the most curious

forms. In one place, we had to pass between two boulders so close together that we had to dismount and lead our beasts through by the bridle. Mursuk rolled his eyes and flattened his ears, and I was afraid was going to kick, but he fortunately changed his mind and came quietly through.

Then we found ourselves in a place full of trees without leaves, and all white, the very ghosts of trees and very sad and grim, and we rode slowly through with "drooping crests."

We cheered up a bit when we reached a field of tufted fir-trees, all alike, and so low that we had to bend low to pass under them; of course, all the horses insisted on going under them, just as they *would* walk at the edge of the precipices.

The guides hurried us up, time was passing, we were all hungry, and had what some one called a thirst of the damned, as for a long time we had passed no stream, only the sandy plain, the arid rocks, the ghostly trees. Some of the party were "grousing" a bit when a saviour presented himself; Mursuk shied at him, so strange was he. Imagine a wild hairy creature dressed in dirty white linen, a sheepskin waist-

coat, a *catula* of wool on his head. It was an old priest, who, with a smile that was literally childlike and bland, offered us sheep's milk in a bowl.

I waited eagerly for my turn to drink. The milk was perfectly horrible! It did us good nevertheless, and the dirty old fellow went away, clinking some coins and smiling more blandly than ever.

We jogged along for two more hours, on the same narrow stony road, sometimes mounting to a great height, only to descend again immediately; we crossed a little field, the grass studded with tiny flowers. At lask Mursuk pricked his ears, the wise beast knew we were arriving, we called out encouraging words to each other, bent backs straightened, smiles succeeded frowns; "like sunshine after showers," one young man remarked to me, with a sentimental glance, which was a little spoilt by a sudden clutch at his pommel. We crossed a larger plain, the summit of the hills cast curious shadows across it, then a little path bordered with trees, we could hear a stream, enormous rocks rose before us. To the right stood a little house, to the left some huts nestling up to a rock still higher than the others.

I told Mursuk excitedly that here was the Pestera Monastery at last, he only rolled a wicked eye and shook a loose heel!

I was right, it was the Pestera Cavern. In the enormous cavity in this rock the monks have built a tiny church, and they live here, thirty of them, separated from the rest of the world by all the mountains and precipices which I have crossed tremblingly on Mursuk's back. They live on *mamaliga*—maize-flour cake—and on the milk from their cows. Behind the little church the cave lengthens out still further, finishing in a subterranean gallery in which the curious may walk. The Pelesch runs through it. From this I gather that in very ancient days the cavern was hollowed out by the action of water, but that was long before the monks took possession of it.

Personally, I detest underground roads, so I let the more adventurous wander along it, and contented myself with looking at the cells of the monks and their little cemetery. Last year one of the oldest died, his resting-place is marked by a new cross. A young one, about sixty, replaced him on earth.

I wish I could describe adequately the wonder-

ful aspect of this corner of the earth. The rocks so high as to be almost frightening, the huge trees, the pale blue sky. Before us lies the little cemetery, at our feet rushes the stream, and over all broods a strange calm. We dare not shout to each other as we had been doing on the way up; as we went down the steep path towards the little rest-house the bell of the church began to ring. It was the monks' hour of prayer, and we walked on more silently than ever.

The rest-house is about a hundred steps from the Pestera; it is composed of two rooms, having for all furniture a wooden table and a bed formed of planks.

As we entered the house, we found another party of excursionists had forestalled us and taken possession of the two small rooms. Here was a dilemma! You can imagine the talking, the very animated talking, that took place. I rather fancied rolling myself in my cloak and sleeping under the stars, but no one else seemed to agree with me, and after much talking it was agreed that each party should have a room—one room for sixteen people! It never seemed to strike these young Jews that the men might sleep outside by the great fires that the peasants

built up on the open space in front of the house.

One fire for each party; on ours was a large saucepan into which the cook or cooks put slabs of *maggi* of two kinds. The mixture was detestable, but it was hot, and we wanted something to warm us. Since the sun went down we were freezing, and I know my noble nose was a heavenly blue!

After supper we all began to yawn, some one kindly suggested bed, and we all went into the one room. The window was opened as wide as it would go; on the bed, which was as wide as it was long, six ladies stretched themselves, packed together like sardines. I was one, fortunately, on the outside, and I fell off at regular intervals during the night on to the person lying on the floor below. The rest of the party lay amongst hay on the floor. I could just see through the window, and one great star seemed to wink at me until it disappeared from view.

We got up at 4 o'clock, and went down to the stream and washed our faces in the icy water, and had some *café au lait* before mounting. I imagined Mursuk was pleased to see me, but perhaps he was only cold and anxious to be off. It was cold enough at 4, under the shelter of

the Pestera rocks, but it was nothing to the other side of the mountain, where an icy wind was blowing, and I can truthfully say I was never so cold in my life. I endured it for an hour in silence, then the sun rose over the mountain; we welcomed him with a cheer, and soon we were too hot! There was no shade, the sun poured down on our heads. It illumined the strange world around us. A beautiful world too, and hard to describe, with its immense horizon, its bizarre rocks, the forests with their contrasts of tender green and dark, almost black, shades against the delicate blue of the cloudless sky. We were the incongruous part, with our singular accoutrements, our many-coloured hats with veils floating from them; the men in their inartistic modern clothes; all of us astride on our ugly little horses.

The peasants alone looked well in their picturesque garments and with their rich-coloured faces. The air was invigorating, we felt alive and full of joy, we sang, we made little jokes and all laughed at them. Margot said she wished she could go on for ever.

Even as she said it a soldier came in sight, then a little house. It was the frontier, civiliza-

tion in its most disagreeable form. Of course the officer asked for passports, we had none; we begged, we prayed, we explained we were only a band of inoffensive fool errants, we only wished to admire the woods, the flowers, the grand blue horizon.

The custom-house officers had no heart, and we were compelled to retrace our steps and return for another night at the Pestera. A peasant was sent hot foot with a letter to the Mayor of Sinaia—I didn't know till then there was one—to get permission.

I was somewhat anxious as to what Madame Goldschmidt would say to my lengthy absence, but I could not return alone, so had to make the best of it, and really I was enjoying myself so much, I felt I didn't mind—the mountain air gets into one's head like champagne.

This letter is reaching gigantic dimensions, and I must hurry through the end of our adventures.

Furnished with the precious document from the Sinaia official, we once more presented ourselves at La Strunga. We were passed this time and rode on our way. The weather changed, a fine rain fell and we could hardly see twenty

paces ahead, and some of us were nervous, as the road was dangerous. The fine rain became heavy rain, which went on steadily for five hours. We were frozen, soaked to the skin, but, to our credit be it said, every one was cheerful and good-tempered.

We rode into Kronstadt a miserable-looking cavalcade, our condition amusing the passers-by. We went to an hotel, had good rooms with big fires, dried ourselves as quickly as possible, had a good rest and sauntered forth to see the town. There was nothing to see in the clean, provincial little place, but there were shops, and we bought a few things, as they were much cheaper than in Bukarest. Then the rain began again and we went to buy umbrellas. We bought twelve at five francs apiece. I never saw anyone so amazed as the little shopman who sold them; I suppose he had never done such a deal in his life.

Armed with these umbrellas we set out for the railway station, as we thought we had had enough horseback and would go home by train.

Of course there was another custom-house. Some one remarked nothing is pleasanter than deceiving a *douanier*, and all our little purchases were easily and swiftly hidden. But, alas, for

one of us! It was easy to buy a sausage as long as a sabre and to hide it under a long cape while the owner swore obstinately that he had nothing to declare, with twenty inches of the famous *salamis* sticking out behind. Every one saw it: we saw it, the other travellers saw it, the custom-house officer saw it, every one except the owner, who could not see his own back.

We laughed too much to speak, the officer finished by laughing too; we paid, and all was over. In such a case, Rumanians are always *bons enfants.*

Madame Goldschmidt was quite pleasant about my late return, and Mella was delighted to see me. Clara said Amalia had been out all night and was ill in consequence and there had been what is vulgarly called a row! However, I have no doubt the young woman will recover and behave herself properly—till next time.

If you have managed to read all this, please accept my love.

Believe me,

Yours,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

LETTER XXX

Sinaia.

My dear Edmund,

The letter arrived at last, and was short and sweet, many thanks for it. So the lady of The Hollies is to be married to a Mr. Burberry-Jones? What a name, may he be worthy of it! And Mr. Talbot gives the pair his benediction and a silver salver, with no doubt a suitable inscription. The "Universe" will be able to print another paragraph.

You ask me about newspapers. There are several daily papers published in Bukarest, both in French and Rumanian, and one can buy German and French papers at the shops and newspaper kiosks. I have never seen an English newspaper for sale, not even the "Daily Mail"; the nearest approach to one is the "New York Herald" published in Paris.

The politicians of the different parties slate each other well; there is a little foreign news and

more local. The paper is poor, the printing only so-so and the ink very inky.

Nearly all the penny papers have serial stories running through them, and these are generally translations from English novelists. Dickens is a great favourite. What do you think is coming out now in a halfpenny Rumanian paper? E. F. Benson's "Dodo"! What can it be like? I wish I knew Rumanian to see, as I do wonder what the translator has made of the society slang which the characters talk.

In the Russian magazine that Madame takes in Hichens's novel, "The Slave," is coming out, and she is much interested in it. I notice that the "Figaro" and other French papers have feuilletons published with them containing short stories quite as silly as those in our "Home Chat" and "Forget-me-not," often a good deal nastier. Mademoiselle Duval devoured them.

I have had a most interesting morning. We went over the monastery that gives its name to this place. It is built on the shoulder of the hill and commands a fine view of Sinaia. It was founded, some tell me, by monks in 1695; a party of them came from Mount Sinaia and named the monastery after it. Some one else

told me it was founded by Prince Michael Cantaenzino, giving the same date.

In former days it served as a guest house, but that was long before King Carol made the place fashionable, or the railway was built.

The monastery is built in two squares. The outer has a new church in the centre, on one side a row of one-storied cottages with a wide gallery, which is painted white and covered with virginia creeper already touched with its autumn red; opposite are some new buildings which were put up for the Queen to live in while the Pelesch was being made; a third side has a kind of cloister. The fourth side is very charming; it too is white and has a sloping shingled roof and small windows. These have a kind of shamrock pattern painted round them in red and blue, the upper story has small bow windows. The walls are hung with virginia creeper and a row of giant sunflowers and faded pink hollyhocks lean against the white wall.

We entered the second square through a long narrow passage lighted with—electric light! The square is surrounded by houses after the fashion of an Oxford College Quad; in the middle is a tiny church—twenty people would

be crowded in it—it has the usual divisions of outer porch, nave and sanctuary, if these are the correct terms. It has only one tower instead of the usual three. This tower is quite open inside and painted up to the very top; the paintings, which look like oil, must have been appalling in their youth, now they are mellowed with age. Amongst other subjects there is a picture of the founder; he was apparently a pious layman, not a monk, as might have been expected. Besides his portrait are those of his wife and nineteen children. There is a strong likeness between them; they were not a handsome family.

The chapel roof is held up by stone pillars with figures of Moses and Aaron, not at all flattering those celebrated persons, though the monk, who was polishing brasses during our visit and took much interest in us, seemed to admire them very much. Every country has its own ideas of beauty.

There are bright flower-beds in the quad, two big fir-trees, and a spring of fresh water surrounded with ferns amongst which we found a family of kittens at play. I think Irma was more interested in them than anything else,

and I left the two children squatting admiringly before them while I entered a door in the main building. This leads into a most curious little chapel; it is lighted with small plain windows along one side, has seats against the wall, and they and the ceiling are elaborately painted. In each of the chapels are two altars, to the Saviour and the Virgin; the draperies on all are tawdry.

The baptistery is a most curious place. Water runs perpetually through a basin semicircular in shape and painted to look like marble; on the wall behind it are rows of sacred pictures, very badly executed and fortunately small.

Besides the font there are some handsome brass candelabra, fine chairs for the Royalties and what looks like a painted pulpit without legs or pedestal. It seems that gorgeous colours please the monks, and are supposed to have the same pleasurable effect on the Deity.

We visited the kitchen; it is beautifully clean and such an odd shape. It has a kind of open tower getting gradually smaller towards the top and painted buff colour. The fine stove was alight; it had a big cauldron on it full of

tomatoes which were being made into a kind of preserve. The twenty-two monks have a woman cook.

They wear long black garments and hats like inverted muffs; their faces are far from intellectual, with small eyes and high cheek-bones.

Doesn't it seem curious that the monasteries and convents which used to be the preserves of wisdom and learning produce in these modern times vacuity of mind in their various inmates?

To-day is the great fête of Santa Maria, so we went up to the monastery, where a crowd of peasants was assembled. A portion of the outer square was railed off with fir boughs, on a long table were a huge pile of loaves of bread, a basket of dried fish and a barrel of red wine. A servitor was handing the food to some peasants who stood waiting; a monk with a dark serious face stood gravely by the table. In the archway leading to the inner quad stood the Crown Princess quietly watching the scene. You remember her name is Marie? She had just been to service in the quaint little chapel. The sun shone on her golden hair and the gold lace of the officers who surrounded her. When the ceremony was over she drove away in her pretty

PEASANT

phaeton and the company dispersed. We went on to the wood, which was full of people.

One officer's wife wore the national dress, a beautiful costume of white and gold and a long gauze veil. I cannot say I thought it became her, as she was of sallow complexion. I may have been alone in my opinion, though; Irma thought she looked beautiful.

In the evening we went to the fair, which was small compared to our big fairs at home, but picturesque; it was held in a narrow street, with quaint gabled houses on either side, a little below the river hurries over some rough stones with pleasant murmurs, and far above a great mountain frowns through the drifting clouds.

Some of the vendors build little shelters of fir branches, which look rather feeble to encounter the mountain storms that come on so suddenly; still, they keep the sun from fading the goods displayed, and make pretty pictures with their owners seated beneath them in bright-hued garments.

The stalls were various in kind. There were sweet stalls, mixed toys from Germany and Birmingham and some pretty native pottery. I bought three dear little jugs at five cents each.

I will give you one, which will you have? A soft brown with yellow spots, an all-brown or an all-yellow? I will generously give you your choice.

It is a long time since I had a real letter from you, you are growing very slack. Do write again; I suppose you are busy shooting in Scotland?

We are all well here, a little dull, perhaps, without Mademoiselle.

Yesterday I found Amalia weeping in the room we call the nursery, violently and unrestrainedly, as such young persons do weep. I was sorry for her, but not knowing a word of her language could only *look* my sympathy as expressively as possible. I suppose she had had a quarrel with one of her many lovers.

Madame Goldschmidt was out at the usual poker-party; we are having one here next week.

The weather is very stormy. It is fine now, but even as I write I can hear the thunder rumbling among the mountains. I don't wonder some people call it the voice of God, it is both mysterious and impressive.

There is a flash of lightning! I must finish.

Mella is terrified of a storm and may wake any minute. Good-bye. Mind you write.

Yours as ever,

MILLIE ORMONDE.

I open this to say we are all most upset. Madame Goldschmidt has lost her great sapphire ring.

LETTER XXXI

Sinaia.

My dear Edmund,

We have had terrible happenings since I wrote last, what between them and my anxiety at not getting your usual letter I am nearly distracted.

You remember I told you in my last letter that Madame Goldschmidt lost a ring? This was an especially beautiful one with a valuable sapphire, and on account of the colour of the stone we always called it "the blue ring."

It could not be found. Madame stormed; the children howled; the maids wept; we all hunted high and low.

We turned out boxes and drawers, shook mats and carpets. We went through Madame's numerous wardrobe, even feeling round all the hems and flounces of her skirts; the ring was not there.

Then the police were informed, and we had several visits from them. Yesterday morning

Madame told me they had a clue; later she was telling old Cookie, when Amalia passed by with a tray of china; she tripped and let it fall, and in the confusion that ensued I did not hear what it was.

Thursday was the poker-party day. The weather was uncertain; it has been appalling lately, in the real meaning of the word. We have had thunderstorms accompanied by torrential rain nearly every day. The Prahova, from an ordinary fussy mountain stream, has become a turgid brown river, sweeping everything before it, sometimes bearing large trees upon its waters.

It was four o'clock; the poker-party assembled in the larger *salon:* about a dozen men and women. It was just tea-time; I was in the small *salon* cutting up cake, singing to myself the while—you often called me the bee in a bottle in the old days, do you remember, I wonder?—Amalia was making a good deal of noise amongst the tea-cups in the pantry near by. Outside it was extraordinarily still, there was no sound but the rush of the river.

Amalia passed the open door, looking very smart with a big black bow in her hair, carrying

the tray; something in her face made me look at her again. Suddenly her cheeks blanched, she stood a moment motionless, then looked wildly round like an animal caught in a trap. Two policemen were advancing towards her from the further door. One of the poker-players pushed back his chair. Amalia gasped, she threw another wild glance, turning her head from side to side.

I seized the tray. "Run," I whispered. She caught my meaning, turned swiftly, and ran through the wide-open window of the little *salon* into the park. At the same moment it seemed as if the heavens opened. The wind shrieked, the thunder clashed and rattled, the lightning flashed so continuously that the air was full of violet light; all the doors in the house banged, rain fell with deafening noise on the roof. Mella began to shriek and I rushed to take her; I held her firmly, pressing her face to my shoulder. Irma rolled herself in a mat and hid in a corner. One or two women screamed. Nothing could be done till the tumult ceased. From where I stood with Mella in my arms I could see, by the flashes of lightning, a bit of the road leading down to the gate; presently I saw

a figure race by with dark hair streaming in the wind. There was darkness again, then I heard a scream, another flash showed me a policeman close behind the girl make a clutch at her flying skirt. The far gate swung and slammed to.

The storm only lasted twenty minutes. When all was quiet again two of the young men who had been playing poker went out.

One returned shortly; he had a black bow soaked with rain in his hand.

"Did they catch her?"

It was Irma, I think, who asked. She had unrolled herself as soon as the thunder passed; we could just hear it growling down the valley.

The young man shook his head, his lip trembled. He is a nice young fellow, and the scene had unnerved him. He looked at me and spoke in English:

"She flung herself into the river just above the bridge. A great fir-tree came along—nothing could save her."

Terrible shrieks came from the *salon*. Clara rushed in.

"Nanna, come at once," she said. "Mamma has hysterics!"

I thrust Mella into the astonished man's arms, she was still trembling, and tore after Clara.

It was some time before Madame Goldschmidt was restored, and as one or two of the other ladies followed suit, we had a lively time. Mella kept up a kind of accompaniment of "Nanna! Nanna!" till I had leisure to comfort her and put her to bed.

Poor handsome, foolish Amalia! It was she who had stolen the ring; it had been traced by the police to Vienna, where she had sent it to an aunt to be sold.

The reason for the theft was a very old one! She was in love with Monsieur Alcalay, and she wanted money to buy things to try and make herself more attractive, as he was beginning to tire of her. Poor Amalia! This was the end. The brown Prahova and five foot six of good earth.

Several things that puzzled me in the past are now explained, amongst others the dislike Amalia always had for Mademoiselle Duval, which she showed in various crude ways.

Madame Goldschmidt has got her ring back, but I don't think it will have pleasant associations

for her. She is so upset by all that has happened that she is going to Marienbad, or some other Bad, for the rest of the summer; she takes Clara with her, and we go to her sister's for a while. I do not know how I shall like it, but, anyway, if I want a holiday I shall be able to take one, as the latter—I have never managed to learn her name, these Rumanian surnames are so impossible for English tongues—is very fond of the children and likes to have them to herself.

I have not made up my mind where to go, but am thinking of Rustchuk, which is just across the Danube and easy of access. It is in Bulgaria, and I should like to invade another country. You must be having a lively time not to have a moment to write your monthly letter. It is more than six weeks since I heard from you. "Out of sight out of mind" is an old proverb I have often refused to believe in, but now—— Ah, there is the postman coming; I will go and see if he has anything for me.

Forgive me, my own dear. I have just received a newspaper, and in it a long account of the severe accident to Mr. Talbot. May I not come to you at once? Do tell me! Madame Gold-

schmidt will understand, and if she does not I can't help it. Let me come!

Your sorrowing, anxious

MILLIE.

XXXII

Telegram from Edmund Talbot to Miss Ormonde:—

Accident much exaggerated nearly well start for Sinaia to-morrow unless hear contrary wire by return.

Millie Ormonde to Edmund Talbot:—

Come.

THE END

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on 15 October, 2018